

THE
MISTAKE:

OR,
SOMETHING BEYOND A JOKE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By P. LITTLEJOHN,
AUTHOR OF HENRY AND THE CIPHER.

Res est solliciti plena timoris amor.

OVID.

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THE
MISTAKE.

CHAP. XXIX.

The modern mode of Filial Compliance.

“ **H**ERE is a canting ecclesiastic !”
exclaimed Lord Southby, scattering the
letter in fragments, about the apartment.

“ *A whoreson Achitophel !—a rascally,
yea, forsooth, knave !—A fellow that is con-
tinually preaching up the doctrine of vir-
tue, whilst his chief delight consists in see-*

ing vice flourish ; maintaining withall such a profound veneration for the dignity of our august family, that in this very instance, in order to prevent a secondary branch from marrying beneath his rank, he villainously advices the complete d—nation of the very heir apparent, and the absolute ruin of a girl, whose virtue he pretends to venerate. Confound me! if my passion for Charlotte did not rise in opposition, I would bring about this matrimonial match, on purpose to vex these two old ——.”

Poor Edmund had remained in the posture, in which his brother had placed him ; he felt neither the unkindness of his lordship's behaviour, nor even seemed
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sensible of his presence, but the mention of a name so dear, struck on the fibre of his memory, like the unexpected touch of electricity; he ran towards his brother, and seizing his hand, whilst his eye darted a look infinitely expressive,—"Charlotte!" repeated he.—"Where!—tell me, is she happy?—yet that is impossible!—Charlotte cannot be happy, whilst misery stalks around, and strikes down those once dear to her heart—never—O never to rise again."

"Excellently well acted, on my honor!" cried Lord Southby, "why, Edmund, thou art certainly a fellow of some genius,—but faith! you must excuse my want of attention, for here you see me

over head and ears in business." So saying, he led Edmund again to his seat, and pulling out his father's letter which, but for the consequence given to it by the concluding paragraph in his preceptor's epistle, might have kept undisturbed possession of his pocket, till chance had liberated it, perhaps, for a purpose very different from the original intention of its author, and taking again a posture indicative of attention, broke the seal amidst some very appropriate observations.

" You can be no stranger, my dear son, to the real situation of my pecuniary circumstances; nor can you hesitate in allowing, that to my indulging, in many instances,

instances, your extravagances, a very considerable portion of my present embarrassment is to be attributed.—You are also but too well acquainted with the means already taken to procure those aids which folly, (not to call our mutual conduct by a harsher name) has so often rendered necessary. In brief, Southby, you know that every sacrifice within the compass of my individual power hath been made to preserve to us both a necessary respectability, yet the issue, at last is, a total inability to satisfy the clamorous demands of my numerous creditors.

“ To save us both, therefore, from certain disgrace and ruin ; and in order to raise us once more to, at least, a tempo-

rary independence, nothing remains but the sale of my Hampshire estate; in which sale your concurrence, in regard to its entail, is absolutely necessary, and I entertain but little doubt of your ready compliance, considering how much your own immediate interest is concerned, and how much my partiality, has rendered such a trifling sacrifice, a merit;—had, indeed, my fondness been but equally divided, this disagreeable measure might have been prevented, but my unkind treatment of your brother leaves no hope, that the fortune he has so lately succeeded to, can, in any wise, alleviate the necessity of so unnatural a parent.

“ I need not add, that your presence in town, on the execution of the deeds, is necessary,

necessary, nor, I hope, solicit in vain for an immediate compliance to the solicitation of him, who is, &c. &c.

WELLFORD."

It would require no small share of ability, accurately to delineate the mixture of astonishment and ridicule depicted in the countenance of Lord Southby, as he read, or to speak with more accuracy,—*as he whistled* over this paternal request,

"Pity the sorrows of a poor old man!"—

said he, with an appropriate accent, and throwing the letter on the bed, where Captain Fairfax lay, without turning round, or noticing the act in any other way than a strange distortion of his features,—“Read,” cried he, after a silence

of some minutes, “ and as you can, on common occasions, reason most profoundly on causes and effects, try, on this momentous one, whether thou can’st demonstrate on what particular foible of my temperament, this sagacious old gentleman has built his hopes of my compliance with this civil proposal.”—Fairfax took the paper, but being by no means unacquainted with its contents, little time was necessary in its perusal. The truth was, the scheme originated with himself; some late applications in a pecuniary way, through the medium of Dr. Jennings, having failed of success, first suggested to his ready imagination, the completion of the Earl’s ruin, by the sale of the aforementioned estate; hints, for this purpose, had

had been in consequence communicated, strengthened by the whole influence of this officious confidant, who, flattered by the prospect of sharing in the spoils of this supply, dreamt not that he himself was destined by Fairfax to share in the general wreck;—but entered with a spirit into the scheme, and pleaded the cause so effectually, that the Earl acquiesced with that little consideration that had, through life, marked his conduct.—This acquiescence had been communicated to the captain, who in course was fully prepared to argue against the sudden opposition of Lord Southby—but his Lordship was a genius, on whom argument, however plausible, had no other effect, than what is termed a *contrary* one, and therefore, on this occasion,

the captain for once mistook his avocation ; for had he used but half the rhetoric on the other side of the question, it is highly probable, that the Earl of Wellford's request would have been complied with.—As it happened.—“ I'll be——” exclaimed Lord Southby, substituting a violent snap of the fingers, in lieu of the word that should have followed, and pointing significantly to his collar, to convey a more explicit meaning ; “ if the old fellow touch a farthing on the score of these estates, and to convince him on it, I won't go to town this month.”

At this moment a messenger, who had followed him from Wellford Lodge, entered the room, and presented him with a letter.

“ And

“ And what of life remains for me,
“ I’ll pass in sober ease;
“ Half pleas’d contented will I be.”

As he quoted these lines, he had opened the letter without looking at the direction.—The characters struck his eye, and the contentment he had promised himself vanished.

“ My dear life,

“ When I left you this afternoon, I forgot to remind you that my promissory note, granted to Sir Timothy, for £500,—becomes due to-morrow.—You know it is a debt of honor;—and in case of its not being liquidated in due course, the impudence of the baronet may propose a mode of payment, from which a modest woman must shrink, and nothing but ne-

cessity can induce a compliance :—in this kind of negociation, you know the baronet to be an adept,—and therefore consult your own intrest and comfort, by either following me to town, or dispatching such orders to your agent, as will insure the honor and peace of my dear creature's

truly loving wife,

N. SOUTHEY."

The countenance of the husband acquired but little symptoms of wisdom, from this loving intimation, backed with such a palpable insinuation which some former falling off of his *rib's* strengthened, and stamped with a meaning not to be disputed.—The effect was instantaneous.—

" I am

“ I am off,”—said he.—What the persuasion of friends, or the supplications of a father, could not effect, was performed in an instant, by this tender effusion ;—he marched down stairs—and without taking the least notice either of his brother or of his situation, got into his chaise, and took his departure for London.

Poor Edmund, indeed, felt not the unkindness of this unnatural behaviour—his thoughts being directed to no certain point, but hurried by the rapid vicissitude of a disordered imagination, perceived not the trivial unkindness of a brother, amidst horrors of so much greater magnitude. His faithful attendant, at last succeeded in getting him conveyed to bed ;—where
having

having administered such medicines, as he judged best adapted for allaying the alarm-fermentation of his spirits,—had soon after the satisfaction of seeing him drop into a profound slumber.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXX.

The depraved mind strikes virtue off as an unnecessary assistant.

THESE unexpected events, intirely frustrated the schemes previously planned by Captain Fairfax,—the flight of Charlotte—the malady of Edmund—and the obstinacy of Southby ; were alike discouraging and ungrateful, and to one of a less inventful genius, or to one more easily recalled to a sense of propriety by the failure of plans, the disclosure of which ensures the reprobation of the world, would

would have been followed by a total abandonment of such intentions, but Fairfax, almost alike used to success and disappointment, was too hardened in the ways of vice to be frightened into the paths of rectitude by discomforture ;—on the contrary, such obstacles in the way of his pursuit, were only incentives to perseverance, and bracers to that spring that regulated his general conduct. Flattered by the events of former gallantry ;—the recent conduct of Charlotte, tended only to shake his previous entertained notions of her virtue ; and consequently held forth the lure of a more certain conquest ;—the inconvalescent state of Edmund, though it cut off the prospect of that immediate aid in money matters he had expected, opened

opened a door, that admitted the possibility of still greater advantage to be derived on the probable event of a commission of lunacy being sued out; and even the obstinacy of Lord Southby, in refusing a compliance with his father's request, he now twisted to his purpose, by a supposition, that the security thereby given to his inheritance, might enable him to raise a still farther temporary supply in which he could equally share;—pleased with these secondary considerations, his mind regained a tranquillity, befitting a better cause, and his wound soon assumed an appearance, beyond the dread of danger. Under the specious pretext of administering comfort to Edmund, he had wrote to several of his acquaintances

quaintances in the metropolis, to solicit their endeavours at once to find out the residence of Charlotte, and to promote a quarrel with Sir Samuel Belford, both of which gratified his passions of love and revenge,—he wrote also to the Earl of Wellford, feelingly describing the situation of his youngest son, and hinting how necessary it was to have immediate precaution taken, with regard to the valuables at Wellford Lodge, not omitting to mention how very proper a person he himself was, from his intimate acquaintance with every circumstance, to fill such an important post; this last insinuation, he took particular care that his friend, the Doctor, should elucidate in a way to insure the Earl's approbation, at the same time,

time, that he gave the necessary intimation, how necessary it was to have sufficient proofs of Edmund's lunacy established previous to his being intirely divested of his property. In midst of such a multiplicity of ideas, one crept in worthy of the man, and which considerably added to the rest of satisfaction he enjoyed in prospective, and this was nothing less than the introduction of his own wife, (of whose charms though tired he was still conscious,) to the Earl of Wellford. This nobleman, notwithstanding so long a course of dissipation, still retained a portion of that love for variety, which in his more-juvenile days, distinguished his conduct; which rendered him the easy prey of the avaricious, and but too often the
destroyer

destroyer of the happiness of that very object who secured for a moment the ardour of his affection. Mrs. Fairfax, still in the bloom of life, the Captain well knew possessed all the requisites necessary to blow the fire of his lordship's passion, and though he was well assured that her love for himself was too strongly grounded to be shaken by temptations, however splendid it approached, yet he at the same time knew, a trait of variety subsisted in her system, which would eventually serve to encourage the hopes of her noble admirer, and, at all events, serve as a fit pretence for a pretended suspicion on his part, which the general censoriousness of the world would sanction, and in consequence, pave the way for a prosecution for damages,

ges, and a consequent separation,—the latter of which, his passion for Charlotte seemed to render the more necessary, as to its cruelty, it was a *bore*, which the fashionable part of the community laughed at, and he despised.

To bring about a previous interview seemed easy, the Earl, though highly incensed at the indiscreet connexion of his heir apparent, countenanced the match sufficiently to know, how much the advice of the fair Egyptian influenced his son's conduct, and in the present refusal of Lord Southby, the exercise of such influence was rendered necessary, the imperious temper of Lady Southby, gave to the idea of a direct application, a cast of un-

unpleasantness rather derogatory to a Peer of his consequence,—an application, however, through the means of so intimate a friend as Mrs. Fairfax, took off the delicacy of the request, whilst it strengthened the hopes of its success, and could not fail of being swallowed by one, who in general looked no deeper into a transaction than its probability.

Such a series of contemplation was in some measure mitigated in its severity, by intervals occasionally employed in the necessary attention to the situation of Edmund—we say *necessary* attention, inasmuch as a neglect in this particular might not only have been construed much to his disadvantage by the world, but in all probability

bability have turned to the ruin of his interest, or even to the endangerment of his personal safety, in the event of the youth's restoration to health and recollection, and the Captain was blest with too much foresight, to leave that to chance which a little precaution furnished with an apparent certainty—his anxiety, therefore, whilst he himself was confined to his room, had, at least, the appearance of reality, and had ultimately the same effect towards the comforts of its object.

Edmund had passed this intermediate time in a state of piteous delirium, wild and calm by turns,—the fever that raged in his veins, and desolated the seat of his understanding, seemed only at intervals to
affuage

affuage its fury, that the scattered particles of strength might again collect, and the body thereby be enabled to support the shock of the succeeding paroxysm; during the progress of this dreadful malady, the faithful Joseph, had been unremitting in his care and assiduity, and seconded the aid of medical assistants with the most adroit readiness;—old Thompson too, strongly affected by his situation, could scarcely be prevailed on by the powerful inducement of his son's funeral to leave him,—even strangers, who heard the sad tale of his suffering, paid that tribute of sympathy, which humanity demands in favor of an afflicted fellow creature, though a tribute seldom paid, even where a previous information of the object's virtues are credited.

The

The most lucid moment he had enjoyed was that on which Fairfax, liberated from his own confinement, entered the apartment—just awoke from a slumber, in which his fancy, freed from the clog of bodily distemper, by a diminution of the fierceness of circulation, had taken a flight that left on the mind a pleasant sensation, and reduced the animal spirits to a state of unexpected tranquillity.

Fairfax gently drew aside the curtain, and saw a composure in his countenance, that rather surprised than pleased him. Edmund returned the look in a kind of astonishment and pleasure.

“I will be awake presently,” said he, in a low tone of voice, “and will be no longer

longer deceived by the unsubstantial appearances that play on these foolish eyes, and would now flatter me that you were in reality my lost friend Fairfax."

"And why do you doubt the certainty of my actual presence?" demanded the Captain, taking his hand with much seeming tenderness.

"The *voice* too," observed Edmund, returning the pressure; "and yet, treacherous as my memory is, I recollect they told me Fairfax was murdered,—it was then I wished to die too, because all that was dear to me in the world was taken away,—but this obstinate nature would not yield to the extremity of my sorrow, nor
liberate

liberate a poor sad spirit, that panted to be free, and at rest.—Surely, I do not sleep still,” said he, after eagerly looking round on the objects that presented themselves; “and yet every thing is strange, and a confused multitude of occurrences rush on my memory, that would persuade me that what I see is but the spiritual semblance of my departed friend, kindly come to dispel the fumes of this dreadful slumber, in which I have been haunted with horrors so excruciating.”

“I am thy very friend in reality,” exclaimed Fairfax, “hitherto confined by the severity of my own indisposition from personally attending you, but whose enquiries after your situation has been equally

anxious and unremitting; thy friend, whose satisfaction, on his own recovery, is only gratifying as it tends to enable his watching o'er that of Edmund,—a friend, already blest with the prospect of a speedy end to the severity of a fever that has thus rudely shaken your health and constitution.”

“ A *fever!*” repeated Edmund, with emotion, “ I would have flattered myself all had been the playing of the imagination, whilst the actual sense had been locked in sleep.—I am giddy, weak, and faint—my pulse too, like the wind, after the fury of the storm has subsided, scarcely trembles in its course,—and the sad confusion in my brain, all confirm what you would keep from me ;—mine has been an
intellectual

intellectual distemper,—yet I must not complain,” added he, with a pathos of inexpressible softness, “I ought to have borne up better against the disappointments of the world.”

CHAP. XXX

A matrimonial quarrel.

THE entrance of the physician prevented, for the present, any farther explanation on so feeling a subject, and the captain retired, not (as has before been hinted) quite so well satisfied with these proofs of his friend's returning reason and bodily health, as friendship, in the strict acceptation of the word, may have required;—the truth was, he foresaw the measures he had adopted would be seriously thwarted by the convalescence of
Edmund,

Edmund, and he had no inclination to study a new arrangement, and still less to abandon a pursuit so connected with his interest.—Luckily, to cure this untoward humour, and put an end to some trifling reflections which, in despite of his obdurate nature, would officiously intrude on every repetition of his visit to Edmund, and leave sensations not quite so congenial with his general ideas as he could have wished; an answer arrived from the Earl of Wellford,—containing full and complete authority for his acting correspondent to his own inclination, at Wellford Lodge.

Young Southby, in mean time, encreased again in personal vigour, and the tur-

bulence of his passions gradually subsided into a kind of lethargic melancholy; still, however, he was too weak to permit a removal, but the principal part of his domestics having arrived, a fair pretext was thereby furnished for the absence of Fairfax, a pretext which he failed not to make use of, and with the usual expedition of travelling, he arrived at Wellford Lodge.—This long and intimate acquaintance in the family, rendered the production of his credentials a matter scarcely necessary to accelerate the assistance and acquiescence of the house-keeper in his favor,—his first care being to examine the cabinets and other places that excited his curiosity, from which he extracted such superfluities, as might perhaps have fallen
into

into *worse* hands, he sent then for a lawyer, and had the remainder put legally under the security of a seal;—and having settled the future regulations of the family, on principles the most domestic and economical, and having in fact done all, or perhaps more than was necessary, he prosecuted his journey to London, to render up an account of his proceedings, in the manner best suited to his purpose.

His first care was to pay his respects to Dr. Jennings, where, though he failed in his expectation of learning intelligence of Charlotte—the disappointment was amply compensated by the account of the snare laid for Mrs. Fairfax, having taken effect to the wished for extent.—The Earl of

Wellford having not only visited, but was so charmed by her appearance, manner, and conversation, that the visit had been repeated on views entirely different to those which had first introduced him ;—so smitten indeed was the Peer that, although his affairs were actually in the desperate state already described, and although his eldest son continued obstinate in his refusal to accommodate his necessities ; he contrived to preface his interviews with presents, not very correspondent with his circumstances ; and from the manner they were received, flattered himself in return with a speedy conquest, without once considering the personal danger that might result from an injury offered to an officer of Fairfax's complexion ; or the baseness attached

attached to an intention of withdrawing the affections of a wife from a husband, whom he had every reason to suppose had previously doated on one another—such considerations, indeed, seldom come in the way of modern gallantry; and his Lordship was too well bred to admit such unfashionable monitors to break in upon the volatile eagerness of his pursuits. Mrs. Fairfax, taught by the example of her husband, encouraged the folly of the Earl, merely on the account of the advantage held forth, to meliorate the necessities of that very husband,—too often, indeed, taught such lessons of deception; the presents she received, were received with the smile of wantonness, whilst they were seriously treasured up to please, and to

benefit the man of her heart ;—and the kind glances bestowed in return were so many items of violence, done to the strong bent of her affection and pledged truth ;—she was, in truth, indiscreet merely on compulsion, but yet strictly virtuous, in the sense that virtue is commonly defined.

Now although Jennings had taken a very active part in this matter, yet was he a perfect stranger to the real intention of Captain Fairfax, who, it must be allowed, was too profound a casuist, to place any unnecessary confidence even in his sincerest friends. The doctor, therefore, on this, as on most former occasions, was only the dupe of a specious mode of flattery, which at once gratified his superlative
egotism,

igotizm, and held out a plausible lure for the gratification of his avarice.—This last powerful inducement, to a co-operation with the measures of Fairfax, had seldom turned out indeed equal to his expectation, as the artifices of his associate generally contrived to tax his proportion of the profits to an extent that rendered them very insignificant; but, like most other great philosophers, the prospect of pleasure was to him an equilibrium to the failure of its attainment, and so biased was he, by the professions of the officer, that he seldom doubted their success, far less of their sincerity;—in proof of this, it may be adduced, that notwithstanding the night, on which they thus met, was spent in convivial representations of their future aggrandizement;

dizement; yet did the doctor retire *minus* to a very alarming amount; blest too with the consolatory reflection of having, by his imprudence and want of skill in play, involved his friend in a similar embarrassment.—Fairfax, however, joined no serious reflection to this chagrin,—for as the mishap happened at a tavern, where he was well known, the junto, who had the honor of clipping the wings of the overgrown ecclesiastic, were in fact the actual associates of the captain, and in consequence his loss was not only refunded, but a considerable moiety of the loss of the reverend gentleman tacked to it by way of indemnification.—

“One good turn deserves another”

observed

observed these conscientious gentlemen, as they divided these spoils with the most scrupulous exactness, but they had no conception, that the adage in any way applied to the reverend gentleman, who had thus liberally rendered the turn "*a good one.*"

As it was necessary to his views, to take some degree of precaution, to prevent his arrival in London from being notified in Berner's street, previous to his visit, Captain Fairfax had left his servant and luggage at an inn in the skirts of the capital—and to which inn, after he had slept off the fumes of the night's indiscretion, he returned, and from thence, with every corresponding symptom of fatigue, was conveyed to his own apartments.

Mrs.

Mrs. Fairfax had been informed of her husband's dangerous situation:—the jealousy that had overcome her general temper had, in consequence of the alarm, vanished, and all the primitive love and anxiety, that wont to warm her bosom, returned with invigorated force: she would have set out immediately in order to have watched over the progress of his recovery, had not the advice of friends, aided by what was still more persuasive, her husband's own positive injunctions, conveyed to her in his letters, negatived the impulse of her inclination, though it but added to the common uneasiness of absence, and gave to her wish for his return, a fervency altogether unusual.—

She

She now, therefore, saw her husband return with a transition correspondent to a transaction so exquisite, and received him with every mark of tenderness and joy,—amidst the unnumbered endearing attempts, by which she strove to amuse and please him, the glittering presents, received from Lord Wellford, were not forgot, nor shown without an accompanying explanation, delivered with a smile of pleasantry and good humour.

Fairfax eyed them with surprise—and turning suddenly to his wife, demanded, what return she meant to make for such a profusion of fine things?

Mrs. Fairfax, more startled at the manner than at the words, replied with a
hesitating

hesitating smile—"just such a return as my Fairfax shall advise."

The open satisfaction that had previously overspread his countenance, suddenly disappeared, and a well counterfeited seriousness took possession of his features.—
"Advice," repeated he, ironically, "no, Clarissa, in such a delicate transaction, the advice of a husband is neither fashionable or proper.—Without my advice," added he, sternly, "you have received and entertained a visitor of the most profligate disposition and character, and have accepted valuables, which, you well knew, were meant as the price of your honor and reputation,—is it then impertinent in me to ask what may be your own individual determination on the business?"

"And

“ And is it possible,” cried Clarissa, with a tear forcing its way to accompany her words, “ that you can entertain a doubt, that your interest alone was the stimulative to a conduct that my conscience told me was wrong ; or have you a doubt of my carrying my gratitude beyond such interest ? ”

“ *Conscience!* ” exclaimed the Captain, with a contemptuous smile, “ well timed truly, is the mention of this monitor, and strongly, no doubt, did it operate, when titled *worth* told its tale of love, and softly whispered the breathings of ardent solicitation ;—but it was my *interest* that gently inclined your ear to listen, and softened your heart to a grateful return,—by all
that’s

that's sacred! it was kind of you to snatch such an opportunity to benefit him, to whom you had pledged eternal constancy, when it could be accomplished too at the mere trifling expence of sacrificing all that was valuable in yourself,—all that was attractive to me."

The native dignity and pride, which in the earlier periods of Clarissa's life, had blended her actions with more than common respectability, and even amidst the dark obscurity of her late situation, would sometimes dart a ray of former importance, now animated her whole frame, the tear that quivered down her cheek in testimony of her husband's unkindness, was dried away, and her tone became collected and firm.

"Ungenerous

“Ungenerous insinuation!” exclaimed she, “yet too seriously made, not to be the effect of cruel deliberation and intentional insult; yes, Fairfax, ’tis true, I have paid but little attention to that heavenly monitor, with which you so scoffingly tax me, but who was it that taught me this callosity of feeling? who led me from the path of rectitude, to trample on that of morality and peace, but Fairfax?—him for whom I forsook my friends, sacrificed my expectations in life, disappointed the hopes of my parents, and even abjured the divine tenets of my religion;—him, who knowing his power, haughtily triumphs over the object of his scorn, and instead of warding off the ready scandal of the world, is the first to brand a wretch with
that

that very infamy he well knows, none but himself could have occasioned."

Steeled as the Captain was with a more than common portion of assurance, and pre-determined against suffering the austerity of his nature from becoming softened from his present purpose, by the mere effect of words, the unexpected keenness of this just reproach, pierced through the stubbornness of his habitual want of feeling, and for a moment filled his bosom with pity and commiseration.

"Go," continued Clarissa, softening her voice, "follow your inclinations—whilst I flattered myself, with being the object of your affection, the world could
not

not separate us, those affections gone, I claim not the holy tie that bind us as a security—no, I will not be second in your love, nor share it even with Charlotte Southby !”

The blood rushed into the face of the husband at so just a relation—and his surprise at thus finding his purpose discovered, heightened his chagrin,—but a farther discussion was for the present interrupted, by a loud and fashionable knock at the street door.

CHAP. XXXII.

Chit-chat in high life, with some other particulars.

NOTHING could be more unwelcome than a visit at such an inauspicious moment, but before Mrs. Fairfax could signify that she was not at *home*, the room door opened, and in bounced Lady Southby, followed at a very respectable distance by her Lord.—It was the first time her Ladyship had seen the Captain, and it was the first time his Lordship had seen Mrs. Fairfax in *propria persona*.—"But what of all

all that?" remarked Lady Southby,—familiarity in high life is the offspring of momentary acquaintanceship,—'tis the vulgar and low bred that stand on ceremony.—Lady Southby herself handed, or rather threw the chairs, and they were instantly seated

Southby, to use his lady's own phrase, looked wonderful *sulky*,—"but what of all that?" observed she, emphatically, though indeed as to matter of that, had prudence permitted, his Lordship might have advanced something, sounding at least like argument, in justification of those sulky looks he had put on, for by pretty plain evidence it appeared that her ladyship's return to town had not been

attended by those fortunate circumstances she had imagined ; and, in consequence, so far from being thereby enabled to liquidate her debts of honor ; some of her creditors had become clamorous, more particularly Sir Timothy, as she herself had foreseen, taking advantage of Southby's absence, had kept her memory so continually alive, by constant application, that scandal took umbrage at the frequency of his visits, more particularly as some of them were made at seasons which the sober part of society has termed *indecorous* ; nay, on the very night of his lordship's arrival, the servant who was in the secret, was so much surprised at his sudden appearance, that he actually refused him admittance. Southby insisted
on

on point of right, but the servant refused on the principle of necessity, and whilst this party was warmly agitated, it was shrewdly suspected that the aforementioned Baronet made good a retreat from a *tête-à-tête* he enjoyed in an apartment, which decency denies to all but those on a strict footing of familiarity—we say, Sir Timothy *made good* his retreat, only in so far as preserved him from the immediate resentment of the husband, for in its ultimate consequence, it turned out rather unpleasant;—the mere force of gravity had carried him from the window of Lady Southby, into the garden underneath, and from thence, a simple act of agility had conveyed him safely into the yard of a neighbouring grocer, yet his final re-

treat was here unexpectedly impeded by the interference of a large dog, who stood sentinel in this last inclosure, and who, without ceremony, laid him under an immediate arrestment. The noise made by both parties in this procedure, soon produced the grocer, who being equally ignorant of the quality and intentions of his visitor, as was his canine substitute, and not quite in the humour to take the Baronet's *ipse dixit* on the purity of his intentions, called in the aid of the watchman, and had him conveyed to the watch-house, where, to prevent worse consequences, the culprit was fain to produce security for his future appearance, and compliment the grocer with a sum adequate not only to recompence him for the unseasonable disturbance,

disturbance, but to secure his perfect silence on the subject, and here the matter would have ended—but, unluckily, this same feller of sugars had a wife—than whom no wife in the parish of St Mary-le-bone, was better gifted with the talent of *gossoping*.—This was a thing too good to be dropt,—the real fact came out, and as Lady Southby was neither the favorite of the grocer's wife, nor of ever a wife in the street, the tale went round with appropriate observations, and Lord Southby was at last good naturedly let into the secret, after every body else was tired of it; *but what of all that?* was a trite observation of *Nan*, on all occasions where a better argument could not readily be substituted,—and as for the baronet, when roundly

taxed with this suspicious transaction, he declared on his honor, the whole to be an egregious *hoax*, and that the story of the dog and the watch-house, was occasioned by an affair of gallantry with the *rib* of the very grocer, whose meddling disposition had occasioned so precipitate a movement.—With this explanation, for want of a *better*, Southby was fain to be satisfied, and left a farther discussion to the pleasure of the grocer and his wife, on whom, this last mischievous avowal of Sir Timothy, brought the ridicule of the whole neighbourhood.—But to have done with this digression,—

“ You may well be surpris’d,” my dear Fairfax,” cried her Ladyship, addressing herself

herself to Mrs. Fairfax, "on thus seeing myself and *chum* at an hour so horribly unfashionable,—but the truth is, we want money, and are therefore——Lud! Clarissa, you look dejected—have been crying too, 'tis so monstrously *droll*—to be sure, your Captain is handsome, and I dare say as wicked as you may suppose,—but, *what of all that?* 'pon my reputation, I would not shed a tear for the finest fellow in Christendom,—you know I would not, Southby."

Southby admitted the fact, by a hideous yawn, but being in no humour to comment on its propriety, he turned to the Captain, and swore, he was d—n'd glad to see him, particularly as report had

killed him since he saw him last—an event which, with equal fervency he swore, he had been d—n'd sorry for,—“but we are all mortal,” observed he, casting a consolatory glance at his help-mate.

“Man wants but little here below,

“Nor wants that little long.”

The subject was melancholy, he said, and he took out his pocket glass, and picked his teeth.

“You have been crying, my dear,” repeated Lady Southby, “and I’ll bet ten to one I guess the cause.”——“Done,” said Southby,—he forgot that he had that very morning, given her his last guinea, and, therefore, though he eagerly put his hand into his pocket, he pulled it out again

again just as empty as before.—Fairfax, who seldom was without an excuse, nor without a corresponding ingenuity to turn such excuse to his own advantage, relieved the embarrassment of his wife by observing, that during his long absence, Clarissa had been necessitated to incur a few debts, and he not having, since his arrival, had time to adjust matters with his agent, a rude fellow had just been there, and had taken the liberty to use some threats to enforce payment, at which she had been terrified.

“Is that all?” cried Lady Southby, “why did not you throw the wretch out at the window?—why, it is but a month ago, that I tumbled such a rascal as this,

down stairs, for presuming to dun me for money—'tis so rude and saucy for such vermin, that the breaking of their bones becomes a merit ;—but, however, you shall not be uneasy on this score, what may be the amount of the debt ?”

Fairfax expected this question, he was no stranger to the character of the lady, however chance, or the caution of his wife, had prevented hitherto a personal acquaintance, and, therefore knew that amidst her foibles and her faults, a spark of generosity existed, which the want of proper cultivation alone prevented from burning bright and attracting ; to have named a large sum, from the known circumstances of the party, would have defeated its own intention,

intention, he was therefore moderate in the sum,—'twas fifty guineas.

Nan pulled out her purse, the contents of which had cost her Lord no small portion of anxiety, as well as the sacrifice of some superfluous pieces of plate,—*but what of all that?*—she counted out the money with the most appropriate indifference.—The Captain refused as long as prudence would permit, to allow his wife to accept this testimony of friendship, and as for the worthy courtesy Peer, he remained as best became the circumstance of the case, perfectly neutral.

“The truth is—we want money,” repeated her Ladyship, thrusting, as it were, the intermediate occurrence into a paren-

thesis, "and are, therefore, come to signify, through the medium of you Clarissa, as the chief plenipo of the Earl our worthy father, our compliance with his request in regard to *them there* estates."

"And are you really serious in this compliance, my Lord?" demanded the Captain.

"I have left the whole to the management of Nan," replied Southby.—

"Yet do not my folly reprove,

"She was fair—and my passion begun,

"She smil'd—and I could not but love,

"She is faithless—and I am——"

"Quite the thing, 'pon my honor," added he, by way of closing the rhyme, without giving the offence which the participle *undone* might have occasioned,—
"but as to the consequence of such condescension—

descension—I am the son of a”——the door again opened, and the very parent whom he was about to dignify with a title not altogether suitable to the duty he owed, made his appearance.

“ Most *apropos*, my Lord,” said his daughter, “ we were just talking of you, though far from expecting the honor of your presence.”

“ I am sorry,” replied the Earl, rather drily, “ that your attention has been engrossed by so bad a subject—my visit was intended to this lady, to whom, of late, I have given but too much trouble.”

“ And our visit has been in order to render your’s the more comfortable,” said
Lady

Lady Southby, "*but what of all that?* we have complied with your wish."

"Then, am I afraid you are strangers to my present wish," replied the Earl, "providing you allude to the sale of my estate in Hampshire, for since I took the liberty to trouble this lady with my sentiments on this subject, a very unexpected alteration has taken place in my affairs,—and I am now come to put a stop to all farther proceedings in the business."

Fairfax turned pale, his Lordship of Southby quoted a Shakesperean truism, and Nan turning her chair in an opposite direction, muttered something which sounded like, *what of all that?*

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

An instance of generosity, to which no fashionable rule can apply.

“THERE are none here,” continued the Earl of Wellford, “I believe, unacquainted with the disagreeable crisis to which my pecuniary circumstances had approached; the eye of those far less interested saw into my embarrassed situation, and exposed me to the ridicule of the whole town;—thank heaven! the awful lesson passed not without its effect—but left an impression sufficiently strong,
to

to regulate my future conduct, in direct opposition to the folly of the past.—An execution had been in my house for some time past, and the actual sale of my effects took place yesterday.—My journey through life, had procured me a general acquaintance in the fashionable circles, but it had secured me no real friendship,—my prosperity had been distinguished by no disinterested or generous action, and my poverty came unpitied, nor moistened by the tear of gratitude.—The whisper of distress now proceeded my steps,—those who could have assisted me, warned thereby, shunned me,—those who could not,—met me unmoved, and even hinted at my situation with exultation.—In short,—I saw myself without a friend ;—without a house ;

house;—without money;—my furniture the most superb in the metropolis, and the greater part thereof handed down to me from my ancestors,—gone, scattered about the town, or tumbled promiscuously amongst the lumber of Broker's alley, and the stately mansion of the Southby's, on the verge of being rudely divested of all its solid properties, and modernized into a haberdasher's shop;—from this unenviable situation, the intervention of one generous, though unknown individual, has rescued me; dispelled those clouds of gloom that o'er-hung my prospects, and restored me once more to an independence, and to more than deserved tranquillity of mind.

“ On

“On my return last night to the hotel where I now lodge, I found a packet that had been left for me, accompanied by a strict charge that it might be safely delivered;—habituated lately to nothing but tradesmen’s bills, and disagreeable demands for payment, I concluded this to be of a like description, but judge my surprise—when, on opening it, I read this note.

“With this, Lord Wellford will receive the necessary vouchers to put him once more in possession of what the sale of this day had deprived him,—together with a small sum, without which the recovery might be of little importance, and even then incomplete, without an accompanying

panying assurance that his Lordship's town residence will be again restored to him, as soon as the proper writings for the re-conveyance are finished.

"Every possible attention has been paid in the arrangement of this business, to prevent Lord Wellford's creditors from interfering in an act intended solely for his personal benefit, and the only request in return is, that the whole may remain a profound secret."

"My astonishment was still heightened," continued his Lordship, "when I found enclosed with the receipts that had been granted, on payment of the purchase-money,

money of different lots of my furniture, carriages and horses, were Bank notes to the amount of five thousand pounds.

“ Though I had no reason to doubt the validity of the notes,—yet I could not help entertaining a suspicion that the whole was a mockery, intended to insult my misfortunes; and early this morning have been with my agent, and from his information, find such suspicion harsh and ill-founded; though as yet I have discovered no clew to lead me through the mysteries of the transaction.—It appears, that amidst a variety of bidders that attended the sale—one person alone seemed eager to become the purchaser—he was muffled up in a great coat, and seemed studiously

studiously to keep himself concealed—articles of little importance or of little intrinsic value he passed over, but those of a different description, he made his at any price—his perseverance at last overcame opposition, and some of the most valuable lots were knocked down to him, without being enhanced by contention;—contrary it seems to the general mode, on such occasions, of merely paying a deposit in the first instance, he insisted on paying down the whole purchase money,—and departed without either leaving his address or ordering the things to be moved. I am informed also, that my house had previously been disposed of by private contract, to this very same gentleman, and that the proper deeds are absolutely in great forwardness,

wardness, whereby it is again to become mine and the *younger* branches of my family for ever."

Lord Southby, who had hitherto stood picking his teeth with a wonderful degree of inattention, was roused at the word *younger*, on which his father laid particular emphasis. "And so," cried he, "whilst the *younger* branches of our illustrious tree, are to be nourished by the milk of this *stranger's kindness*, the most prominent bough may be blasted."

"*This* cheek where health with beauty glow'd,
A deadly pale o'ercasts ;
So fades the fresh rose in its prime,
Before the northern blast."

But go on, 'tis a d—n'd good story,
'pon mine honor, "is it not Nan?"——

Her

Her Ladyship had indeed paid so little attention, that she knew not whether it was or not, but *what of all that?*—she had adjusted the œconomy of her wig in the interim, and now nodded approbation to the remark of her Lord.

“ The lawyer employed on this last business, either does not, or pretends that he does not know, either the quality or situation in life of his employer—a fictitious name he supposes has been made use of, notwithstanding which, the whole transaction may be rendered valid and indisputable.”

“ And have you no idea my Lord,”—said Fairfax, “ who this generous friend is?”—

“ There

“ There is but one,”—replied the Earl, with a sigh, “ whom I could suspect of thus stepping between me and destruction—my son Edmund ;—it is but lately that his virtues and tenderness of heart has come to my knowledge, but so strongly does my kindling affections sanction the tale of his goodness, that even such a proof as this of his benevolence to so unnatural a parent as I have shewn myself—would not surprise me,—did the present awful situation of his mind admit its possibility.”

“ With me this last is the strongest possible reason of the *thing's* probability,” cried Lord Southby, archly,—“ for, in my opinion, nothing but the influence of her lunar majesty, could have induced so
mad

mad a conduct.—Come along Nan, we must *brush*."

"Where my love?" demanded her Ladyship.

"Home, my sweet creature,"—replied the husband.

"I don't go home this bout," said Nan, "but *what of all that?*—Lady Gilbury gives a mutton chop at five o'clock, to form a party to Astley's;—we dine at the *Count's* at ten;—and partake of a snug supper at four in the morning, at the fat widow's, in Albemarle street;—'tis on the whole a snug thing.—Sir Timothy——"

"D—n Sir Timothy," exclaimed the husband, interrupting her.——Her

Ladyship flung out of the room, he followed her ; at the door of the carriage the dispute was renewed with acrimony—orders and counter-orders were given to the coachman, who unluckily giving a preference to the commands of his Lord, took the nearest way home and, in return, had himself complimented with what is vulgarly termed a *black eye*, from the fair hand of his lady ;—in return for which Southby, in the true spirit of retaliation, and to use his own expression, completely *trimmed her jacket*, as a specimen of what she had to expect when opposition was carried to such a length, most particularly now that the threat formerly held out, about this same Sir Timothy, had passed into a kind of certainty ;—when the worst

is

is over, we have little to dread from inferior consequences.

In the mean time, Captain Fairfax had listened with somewhat a greater degree of attention to the noble Earl, than did his heir apparent;—such an act of an unaccounted for generosity came not within his notions of human prudence or good management;—indeed he would have concluded the whole a tale of fictitious improbability, had it stood unauthenticated by any other proof than the bare word of the relater; but his Lordship in his warmth had produced the notes—a fact so stubborn that he could no longer doubt.—His thorough knowledge of Edmund's illness, put a positive negative on the father's al-

lusion respecting him, but it furnished him with a hint, which none was better qualified than himself to turn to his own immediate advantage.—The powers that had recently been granted him, in respect to the management of Edmund's affairs, gave a plausibility to his own immediate interference in those of the Earl's, and the obscurity in which the real author of his present comfort chused to remain, was no reason why he should not catch a portion of merit from the enormous mass—nay, on the contrary, the self-denial of the party was, in his way of reasoning, such a proof of folly, as deserved neither thanks or candour, and to draw him from the seclusion he sought, would have been only to expose him to the ridicule of the world.

Prefacing

Prefacing his address, therefore, with some suitable remarks and acknowledgements for the many favors the goodness of the Earl had conferred on him,—he fervently declared, that had fortune put it in his power, nothing could have given him greater pleasure than to have acted in a similar way, with the person just mentioned by his Lordship.

“It is true,” added the Captain, with an ambiguity in his manner, well suited to impose on the temper of his auditor, at this moment warmed with gratitude and pleasure,—“the news of your irksome dilemma, reached me at the only period in my life, when heaven had put it in my

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power

power to be servicable.—The œconomy of Lady Wellford had rendered her last gift to her favourite son of more importance than was first imagined. Your partiality in appointing me to look into these matters furnished the means—I mean, my Lord, had it furnished the means, how readily would I have sacrificed every thing to your peace, and the accomplishment of your independence—had I done less,—I mean, had I omitted any thing in my power, I would have accounted myself the greatest of villains;—if my eagerness in this particular has outrun my discretion—I wish to be understood, my Lord,—that if my eagerness to serve you had, on the event of my being possessed of the means, gone farther than the trust reposed in me

war-

warranted, the intention was, at least, good, and I do not regret—I mean—I would not have regretted the appropriation of a sum,—left no doubt for a very different purpose.”

This address, admirably calculated to impose on the credulity of the Earl, had its full effect;—his Lordship saw, or what was equally to the purpose of the speaker, he thought he saw stand before him, the man whose well timed interposition had saved him from want.—Saw him too with less embarrassment, on the consideration that the means were furnished by the overplus of his own son's fortune, for to have owed such an obligation to a man whom he had hitherto considered in the light of a dependent, and to whom, hurried by the

inconsideration of his passions, he so lately intended a connubial compliment of so delicate a nature, would have alarmed his pride, and rendered a refusal of the whole recent benefits an act of indispensable propriety—but as it stood, the gratitude he thought he owed was unmingled with a sense of the weight of obligation, and he expressed it with frankness and sincerity. Fairfax, with his usual cunning, endeavoured to deny what he had half confessed, and appearing much agitated, his Lordship, to spare him from any farther explanation, took his leave—firmly determining not only to abandon any farther attempt on the domestic peace, but to render some essential return to the captain for so generous an interference.—Nor indeed

deed in this last particular had he time to cool,—for he had scarcely returned to his apartments, when he received the following anonymous intimation.

CHAP. XXXIV.

A favorite Acquaintance again introduced.

“THE Earl of Wellford is hereby respectfully informed, that a majority in an old regiment on the home establishment, is now to be disposed of on terms highly advantageous to the purchaser. His Lordship’s known partiality for Captain Fairfax, renders it unnecessary to say more than that, in the event of a mutual sale being allowed, the difference of money will be trifling, though from the general embarrassment of the Captain’s circumstances,

stances, insurmountable, unless aided by a temporary accommodation.

“The particulars and mode of procedure may be known by application to Messrs. A——, agents for the regiments.”

Nothing could have occurred more apropos;—his Lordship flew to the agents—deposited the necessary sum, and put every thing in the properest train for the speedy completion of the business—taking special care to enjoin a perfect silence as to the part he himself had acted,—with a view not only to screen him from the charge of ostentation, but to preserve the officer from having his delicacy hurt by a transaction which might seem a re-payment of his own generosity;—these however were

precautions more ceremonious than needful, for so far was Fairfax from being a stranger to this impulse of gratitude, that he himself was the sole instigator thereof.

The moment that Lord Wellford left Berner's street, Mrs. Fairfax entered her husband's apartment, and found him actually employed in writing a sketch of the very note so suddenly dispatched after his Lordship, and which had all the effect intended by its author—not chusing however to make his lady a confidant where her assistance was of no use—he pocketed the paper with an air of mystery, and knitting his brows, with symptoms of extreme anger, demanded whether she had given any sanction to the insult he had just received?—

received?—This turn of invention at once surprised and terrified Mrs. Fairfax,—she stood mute whilst he proceeded.—“ Yes, *insult*—and if I absolutely believed that you had, even in the minutest degree, connived at, or encouraged this old dotard’s presumption, by all that is sacred! I would renounce you for ever.”

“ I am equally a stranger to the insult and to the idea of a connivance against your peace,” replied his wife, recovering her fortitude by the meanness of the threat. “ ’Tis well,” cried Fairfax.—“ Wellford has had the impudence to insult me with a proposal, for which I have the strongest inclination to exact the severest vengeance.—A *majority*, indeed,—no, I scorn

scorn promotion, purchased at the expence of my honor.—Your own indiscretion may force us to part Clarissa—but never shall it be said that I sold my happiness for a mercenary advantage.”

Well acquainted as the lady was with the duplicity of the man, his present manner, joined to the previous behaviour of Lord Wellford to herself, deceived her, and an emotion of returning tenderness, overcame every other passion—she related every circumstance that had passed between her and the Earl, and begged her husband to receive the presents which were accepted solely for his benefit—he took the articles with careless indifference, with the intention as he said (but which ~~was never~~ meant to be fulfilled) of returning

ing

ing them to the confusion of the giver,—and remarking that his wife had made out a very pretty story,—took his hat and coolly left the room, leaving his wife in a state of mind truly pitiable.

His first care was to dispatch his fabricated epistle to Earl Wellford, and then to secure the agent's circumspection whom he knew, and to whom he related a very plausible account of his intentions—indeed the business was taken up so warmly by all parties, that in a very short time his name was gazetted amongst other promotions.

In mean time his mind was not so much engrossed by this pursuit, as to disable him
from

from prosecuting other schemes.—His attention to the Earl and his interests was in every appearance indefatigable, and the grand object of poor Edmund's commission of lunacy advanced with all the celerity that such a complicated transaction required.—In this indeed he had played a high game, in which all that was honorable in the eye of morality, all that was necessary for his future respectability, was staked, and required a more than wonted portion of ingenuity to bring it to a favourable issue; so anxious on this account he was that all enquiries after Charlotte had been postponed, and even the balmy influences of sleep banished from his pillow,—his wife had not even the comfort of sharing in his anxiety—he had left her in
the

the humour formerly mentioned, and taking up his abode in retired lodgings, gladdened her no longer with his presence.

Lord Southby took but little concern in a circumstance so nearly allied to himself, —whether his brother was consigned to a mad-house—or his father restored to independence, were matters of equal indifference to him.—The late fracas with his Lady, had rendered home not quite so inviting as it wont, and in lieu had encreased his eagerness to find out Charlotte, whom his imagination still held as an object worthy of his search,—such search had however proved ineffectual, till chance placed him one night in the same box with her at the play.

The

The pleasure he felt was ungovernable; he rudely addressed her, and after some silly observations—asked her whether she had heard of Edmund lately?—Charlotte, who was no less chagrined than his Lordship, was pleased at the rencontre—underwent an unusual emotion at a question which recalled a mixture of love and apprehension,—but before she could reply, Southby added;—

“I mean—since he ran mad.”

Charlotte had hitherto been a perfect stranger to the actual illness of Edmund, the intelligence procured of this circumstance, by Sir Samuel Belford, having been carefully kept from her knowledge—she
had,

had, on the contrary, been taught to believe that he was in perfect health and spirits.—This enquiry therefore conveying in itself such a piteous piece of information, unhinged her fortitude, and with a face pale and infinitely expressive—faintly repeated the melancholy word—“*mad!*”
Indeed, my Lord, I have no idea of your meaning.”

“The d—l you ha’nt!”—exclaimed he—examining his teeth as usual in a pocket glass, with apparent indifference,—why surely you must have heard that your running away with that cursed Baronet—fairly turned his brain, and that in consequence he now enjoys the comforts of bread and water and a strait waistcoat—

’twas

'twas the *hum* of your being his sister,—I verily believe, 'pon my honor! first ushered in the dawn of lunacy,—though I always told him it was all a d—n'd lie—as it has since turned out.”—But

“ Heaven sends misfortunes,—why should we repine,
'Tis heaven has brought *him* to the state *we* see:
And his condition may too soon be mine
The child of sorrow—and of misery.”

Poor Charlotte's spirits fled—the uttered a tremulous shriek and sunk down in a state of insensibility; the incident engaged immediately the attention of the whole theatre.—His Lordship, unused to such delicate workings of the passions, said it was “ d—d odd,”—whilst a gentleman, whose looks had been previously directed to the spot, rushed amidst the confusion to the lady's assistance, and carried

ried her in his arms into the lobby.—This gentleman was no other than Sir Samuel Belford, whose behaviour, on this occasion, was marked at once by manliness and feeling.

The interest he took in this lovely girl's fortune, though warm in the extreme, was yet destitute of actual love; the generous sensibility of his temper had been forcibly touched by her situation, and an intimate acquaintance with the sweetness of her disposition, kindled in him the affection of a brother, without encreasing the flame to that extent that had ruined Edmund;—his behaviour, in consequence of this cautious limitation, had been frank and unrestrained, and a mutual and open confidence was the result.

This

This platonic intimacy took away the embarrassment which Charlotte would otherwise have undergone, on finding herself in the arms of a man on her revival, and she was about to thank him for his kindness,—when her eye met an object that, but for the timely aid of a smelling bottle, had again thrown her into a situation similar to that from which she had just recovered.

With his sunk eyes fixt on her, pale and emaciated, leaning mournfully against the opposite wall;—she saw Edmund Southby;—an appearance so unexpected, so extremely dejected; so different from the blooming youth she had known him;—ominously seemed to concur with what
had

had been so cruelly related by his brother; overpowered by an impulse of tenderness and compassion, she sprang from the arms of Sir Samuel, but a crowd of loungers at that moment intervening between her and the object of her alarm—in vain she endeavoured to accomplish her wish,—no Edmund was again to be seen, nor any person that bore to him the slightest resemblance.

“Speak to me, Sir Samuel,” cried Charlotte, in a voice scarcely articulate,—“tell me if my fears have raised up this phantom—or was what I have just seen in reality my brother Edmund?”

The baronet had indeed seen Edmund, and was equally at a loss to account either
for

for his appearance or sudden vanishment, had he been less opinionated in his ocular exactness, or more inclined to superstition, the improbability of the youth's being in such a place, joined to the suddenness of his disappearance, might have inclined him to imagine that what they had just noticed was but an ærial semblance sent to prepare them for the actual certainty of their friend's dissolution,—but as his dependence on his eye was equal to his disbelief of supernatural warnings, he was convinced that what he had now seen was his identical friend, however his own reason might work in opposition, but to have insisted on such a conviction, would only have added to the trouble Charlotte was already involved in, and he therefore endeavoured to turn the incident into
pleasantry,

pleasantry, by observing that he had himself noticed the object that had alarmed her, in this last instance, and concurred in the striking resemblance he bore to her brother Edmund, but that he had frequently seen the same person, and curiosity had led him to enquire who he was.—“And he is, I assure you, my dear girl,” added he, laughing, “no less a personage than *tensor* general to this very theatre.”

“I have never yet,” said Charlotte, seriously, “known Sir Samuel Belford, declare an untruth, even in joke, without some substantial reason as a palliative.—All pale, and dejected as he is, I think you could not be mistaken in the person of Mr. Southby.”

“ And what reason can be imputed for my denying such a knowledge ?” demanded the baronet, with a smile.

“ A most substantial one,” replied a gentleman, who not only overheard but seemed interested in their discourse, “ a singular goodness of heart !—you’ll pardon the apparent impertinence of my curiosity,” added the stranger, “ acquainted as I am, with some of your late acts of benevolence, I have sought with indefatigable industry to find out your name, and chance having thus accomplished my wish, I could not refrain expressing the happiness I felt on thus ——”

“ Spare your compliments, I beseech you,” cried the baronet, interrupting him,
“ you

“ you see that this lady demands at present an aid and attention, to which ceremony must give way.”

The gentleman bowed, and drew back, not however without an assurance that he would take the first opportunity of expressing his sentiments on the admirable conduct of Sir Samuel; whilst he, now joined by those ladies, in whose company Charlotte had come to the play, conducted them safe to their carriage, and as safely home.

CHAP. XXXV.

*'Tis easier to get into a quarrel, than out
of it.*

LORD SOUTHBY had observed the effect of his rash intelligence with the greatest characteristic indifference.—If he felt any extraordinary sensation it was that of pleasure, at having thus stumbled on an object that he considered not altogether unworthy his pursuit, increased by a belief, which his vanity suggested, that the agitation of the lady was imputable to no other cause than the consequent
extacy

extacy felt at his presence. The sudden appearance and conduct of Sir Samuel Belford, in consequence, mortified and irritated him, and would have been followed by a dispute of a very serious complexion, but his Lordship, in his hurry to impede the progress of his concluded rival, trod on the gouty toe of a gentleman who, from lameness, could not conveniently get timeously out of the way; and in return, had the said gentleman's crutch applied rather rudely to the outside of his own skull; this produced an altercation, not only between themselves, but the bye standers, some of whom took an active part in the argument, and arrested the impatience of his Lordship so much, that he did not come up with the pur-

fued till they were secured in the carriage from the intended interruption.— One advantage seemed to occur, however, from the procedure—namely, the address of the fugitives, which he overheard in the orders given to the coachman, and he was deliberately marking this down in his memorandum book, by the light of one of the lamps, when he was accosted by the very gentleman, whom we have so lately noticed to have introduced himself in so cavalier a way to the baronet. To this person his Lordship was rather more familiarized than was Sir Samuel, having often had occasion for his assistance in the procuration of that very necessary article commonly ycleped, money :—of the true value and nice calculation of which,

than

than this gentleman, none was a more perfect connoisseur; nor indeed was in the practice of a more general employ, amongst those whose expenditure exceeded their regular income, and who, in consequence, durst brave the certainty of future ruin by immediate and temporary supply. He had been the noted instrument for raising the credit and supporting the extravagancies of the unthinking, and for putting off what is called the *evil day*, to make its actual arrival the more severe; and so perfect a master was he in this kind of business, that his computation of the various chances depending on lives and inheritances, with all the *etceteras* attached to the mystery of borrowing and lending, was referred to, in

all cases of doubt or difficulty. It is little to be wondered at, therefore, that his abilities were known to the Earl of Wellford, who so often stood in need of this kind of aid; in the recent embarrassment of that nobleman, this adroit agent had taken a very active share, and the unexpected turn given thereto, totally went beyond his ideas of the common *fair-play of the world*: in cases of difficulty he had often indeed found *disinterested* friends come forward, but sums like these given without the probability of interest, or even the least shadow of security, for the re-payment of the principal, was altogether so far out of his way of bargaining, that he was determined to find out both the author and motives that produced

duced such an effect; in which search he was encouraged by the Earl himself, who, awakened to thought by a just sense of the obligation, longed to return some kind of an acknowledgement; though no stranger to the person of the baronet, his name and consequence had eluded the penetration of this man of business, till the accidental exclamation of Charlotte, discovered them.

After what has already been recounted of Sir Samuel Belford, the reader will have the less difficulty in crediting this information,—nay, it is a matter of doubt whether it has not been an opinion previously entertained, that the principal part of the transaction could apply to no

other with equal propriety. From the moment of the baronet's arrival in town, his attention had been confined to acts of generosity, pointed out by his singular mode of reasoning from appearances, and perfected by the affluent situation of his circumstances. In this amiable pursuit he was cordially joined by Charlotte, whose sentiments were in some measure congenial, and who, in this humane occupation, found a temporary relief to the severity of the anxiety that preyed on her mind, and tinged her spirits with melancholy.

It was during one of their walks in quest of amusement, at once so eccentric and commendable, that they were struck with

with an advertisement announcing the intended sale of the house and effects of Lord Wellford;—equally confirmed in the belief of that nobleman's near consanguinity to Charlotte,—a kind of natural impulse sprang up in the breast of the lady.

“Can I see the author of my existence thus deprived of the actual comforts of life,” said she, whilst the tear of commiseration stole down her polished cheeks, “and the means of saving them to him in my power?”

“And can I hear so dutiful, so generous a wish expressed,” cried the baronet, “without lending a hand to see it accomplished.”

plished.—But, my dear girl,” added he, “you have not considered the sum requisite to such a transaction. The mansion of the Earl, as this public paper expresses it, *is not only spacious in itself, but situate in the most fashionable square in the metropolis, the furniture modernized with elegance and taste, and the whole, comprising the completest winter residence in the circle of the ton,*—in consequence of all this, the expence to the purchaser must be immense.”

“Do not damp my inclination,” said this lovely girl, “if my own finances admit not this sacrifice, I think I might presume to solicit the assistance of Edmund, his heart is moulded in ——”

“Solicit!”

"*Solicit!*" exclaimed the baronet, interrupting her with animation, "rather command me!—Confound me! (I crave pardon for the expression) if ever an Edmund in the kingdom will fly to serve you with more alacrity or satisfaction."

Indeed, Sir Samuel Belford seldom offered his assistance, without being sincere, or ever hesitated in forwarding a scheme which he considered proper; this was an employment to his wish, and he went about it with alacrity: how he succeeded, is already known to the reader—better, perhaps, than recollected by himself; for although things that bore against his common ideas of propriety were registered on the tablet of his memory, things
that

that reflected his own merit, he discarded from his recollection for ever. But,

To return to Lord Southby.—He received the salutation of this *lamb* of the law, as most other great men do their inferiors, when a sense of interest gets the better of self-importance, that is with the outmost show of good humour and cordiality.

“I have wonderful good news for you,” cried Mr. Milwood, (for that was the name of this useful gentleman.) Southby had employed him to raise a sum of money on truly disputable security, and this was a beginning that seemed to augur success.—“My dear Milwood,” cried he, taking

taking him by the hand, "thou art——
but——

"Your pains are register'd,

"Where every day I turn the leaf to read them."

and so you have touched the *ready*,—persuaded the old scoundrel that this was the first annuity I ever granted, I suppose,—and that my worship stood as little chance of falling by the attack of those villainous distempers that prey on the human species, as he did in securing himself a birth in the upper regions."

"You mistake me, my Lord," replied the agent, "I have not been able to procure the sum you wanted."

"No!"

"No!" exclaimed his Lordship, with the particles of condescension, kicking one another from the tablet of his countenance.

"No money, indeed," said Milwood, "but I am happy to communicate a more pleasing piece of intelligence. I have just found out, by the most whimsical of chances, who he is that has so providentially saved your father from ruin."

"And in return," cried the nettled Southby, "permit me to communicate another *pleasing piece of intelligence*, and that is, that if you had not been an *ignorant* rascal, you must have known that I cared just as much for the information

as

as I would have done at the certain accomplishment of my father's ruin."

The *epithet* sounded harsher than did the opprobrious title in the ear of the agent, and he muttered it back through his teeth, adding that *ignorant* as his lordship was pleased to reckon him, he would convince him he at least could distinguish what was actionable."

"That the thing is *actionable*!" observed Lord Southby, with an emphasis, "I will put it beyond a doubt." He immediately applied his right hand to his cane, or rather bludgeon, which, in the true style of modern elegance, dangled from his left wrist by a leathern thong, and
with

with as few flourishes as the circumstance admitted of, levelled a blow at the agent with a force which left little doubt of its intention.

This was commencing a suit with a vengeance unprecedented either in the courts of law or equity; the defendant had neither time to plead, or shew cause, —yet what could be done, he did, and that too with no small degree of dexterity; he suddenly raised his own stick, and though unable either totally to stop or repel the one opposed, he met it in an oblique direction, turned the danger from his own to the head of a person that moment passing, on the crown of which, it took place, with but a trifling diminution

tion of force, and without any previous intimation.

The proprietor of a *caput* thus rudely attacked, as chance, or some other cause would have it, was none other than Sir Timothy Mortimer, of whom occasional mention has been made, and between whom and his Lordship, for reasons more obvious than delicate, there did not subsist much cordiality; and, in consequence, this sudden philip to the baronet's memory, was not likely to form a basis of reconciliation; on the contrary, he surveyed the complimenter, that is, he would have *surveyed* him, had the instantaneous disorganization of his occult senses permitted; with a look of pain, mingled with indignation,

tion, and by a kind of mechanical process, directed a retort, not indeed exact in order of motion, for in his then humour he scorned imitation, yet in a way that gave to the effect a cast of superiority. The feet of Southby quitted the pavement, and his head, without adding any thing to its serenity, took post in a line exactly parallel to that from which they had deserted; as this was neither a situation of choice, nor a posture in which a discussion of past or present umbrages were likely to be adjusted amicably, he nimbly regained his legs, and with much apparent ease deprived Sir Timothy of the use of his members of the same description.

The

The baronet, although a man of high fashion, was yet more an admirer than a practitioner in this kind of pastime, and this last specimen of his opponent's adroitness, was so convincing in point of superiority, that he gave up the contest,—not that his anger was lessened by the other's success, on the reverse, he determined on severe satisfaction, on principles more dangerous indeed, but more congenial to his ideas of honor ; he, therefore, whispered Southby a challenge ; settled the hour, the weapons, and the place ; and left him to digest the whole at his leisure. Now, although Lord Southby would not have offered the smallest objection to have immediately settled the difference by the law of pugilism ; yet he had

had a pride incapable of submitting to a challenge in any shape, or on any occasion, he had also a carelessness of life well adapted to brave the most dangerous proposal; far, therefore, from entertaining a wish to avoid the meeting, he looked forward to it as a thing of course; heightened by a gratifying symptom of revenge; whether this revenge was founded justly, or otherwise, or whether the result was to terminate to his own personal advantage or not, were matters equally unimportant to a nobleman of his peculiar way of reasoning, and in strict adherence thereto not a single thought was thrown away on such useless discussion.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVI.

*Villainy, when thought most secure, is
generally easiest detected.*

MR. MILWOOD, who had been the innocent cause of such a dangerous determination, was totally excluded from any share in its management; indeed he maintained not the smallest portion of his lordship's recollection, and had, on that head, little to dread from his resentment; he had wisely withdrawn from the scene of action, the moment Southby's attention became diverted; but not chusing
to

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to lose the merit of a discovery on which he prided himself, notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances that attended its first disclosure, he went directly to the lodgings of the Earl of Wellford, and found him rather *mal-apropos*, in the company of Captain Fairfax.

Fairfax, had been very assiduous in his attention to the Earl, for more reasons than one;—he had been playing a dangerous game, and more than common subtilty was requisite to secure the advantages he had gained. They were now in close conversation on the final adjustment of poor Edmund's commission of lunacy. The captain had spared neither trouble or expence in the business, and had, at last, procured

procured the evidence of such witnesses as was, in the eye of the law, deemed satisfactory ; whether these witnesses were suborned to his purpose, either by the actual receipt, or what is more probable, by the promise of an adequate *quietas* to their consciences, was a matter which he considered the world had no kind of business with, and although it afterwards came out, that so far were some of these worthy characters from being intimately acquainted with the unhappy youth's fits of insanity, which they described, they were absolutely unacquainted even with his person ; yet he had concluded that no obstacle could possibly occur, that his own precaution, aided by the influence of Dr. Jennings, whom he had secured

steadfast in his interest, and the skill and chicane of a friendly attorney, whom he had long employed in cases of desperation, could not combat and overcome.

There is, however, a fatality attending on bad actions, which sets at nought the cunning of human prudence, and often leads to detection by means the most simple and unexpected.

Milwood's communication was a check against which he was totally unprepared. Earl Wellford saw the blood desert his countenance, and a sudden tremour invade his limbs ; although in himself, of a temper void of suspicion, his Lordship at times indulged a keenness of preception that,

that, in some measure, counteracted the effect of the over easiness of his general conduct; he had observed some recent contradictions in the behaviour of his *worthy* friend, the Captain, with which his present embarrassment seemed strongly to concur, and some very powerful suggestions pointed out the comfortable supposition that he had been grossly *duped*.

“ And are you sure, Milwood ?” demanded he, “ that the person who has taken so active a share in my deliverance, is Sir Samuel Belford ?”

“ Most positive ! my Lord,” replied the agent, “ in his person I cannot be mistaken, and although I might have been

6 2

deceived

deceived in the title bestowed on him by the young lady, as I have just mentioned, yet allow me to add, that having heard the direction given to the coachman that carried them from the theatre, I made bold to call there in my way hither, and have had every thing in regard to his name, title and circumstances, confirmed to me."

"And is it possible, Captain Fairfax," said the Earl, quickly turning toward him, "that Sir Samuel Belford can be that friend that you have indirectly declared, so powerfully seconded your own exertions in my favor?—You have always represented the baronet, as the basest of human beings, not only as your own intended

tended murderer, but as the villainous destroyer of the virtue of an innocent girl, whom he had every reason to believe stood in the near relation of a child to me; as the person, who by this last act, laid the foundation of the wretched Edmund's malady, and the person whom you have sworn to bring to condign punishment. Surely you could not but be aware how little I must be disposed to lay myself under an obligation to such a scoundrel or coalesce with the author of such family disasters. How then am I to reconcile such evident contradiction between your professions and your actions?—you seem confused;—if I have hurt you by an unjust suspicion of your integrity, most readily will I retract,—still you

are silent, and have lost that volubility which, on every former occasion, conspicuously distinguished your conversation. —Gracious heaven ! perhaps your conduct in regard to my boy, Edmund, stands in need of a like explanation, and I am about to sign a deed to deprive him unjustly of his fortune—of his liberty !”

Luckily for the sinking spirits of Fairfax, and to give him a necessary respite, the door at this moment opened, and Lord Southby entered.

“ Fairfax !” exclaimed he, throwing himself into a chair, “ this is lucky.—I have an affair of honor on my hands, and shall want your assistance—and another

ther thing I wish to communicate, I have at last found Charlotte;—d—n'd fortunate—two strings to my bow, 'pon my honor!—death or corporeal gratification!—“My good old gentleman,” said he, addressing his father, “let's have some wine;—confoundedly out of spirits I am, that's certain—yet you see how this base world *wags*!” The Earl condescendingly rang for the wine—his partiality for his son was a foil that continually acted against his understanding, and with such success, that the foibles and impertinences of the youth passed without the necessary reprehension.

Lord Southby swore he wanted spirits, and gave to the wine the fairest of all pos-

fible chances, to exhilirate the portion he had left, and it tolerably succeeded. —“ My dear fellow,” cried he, taking Fairfax by the hand ; “ to-morrow morning at five o’Clock, you must accompany me to Blackheath—

“ For who would fardels bear,

“ To groan and sweat under a weary life!”

Eh !—yet I am divided—curstedly divided in my opinion.—My service to you Wellford.—About this same discussion of love and war.—And egad, I sometimes determine to give *cupid’s* arrow a preference to the pistol of *mars*, because, after this d—n’d, dear, saucy girl has been mine, why, I may settle the other affair at my leisure ;—but beginning the story at the other end,—a clumsy thrust in the guts,

or

or a bullet in the brain, might effectually spoil my relish for softer amusement afterwards—but then again my honor!—plague on't—and my promise—ey—and the d—lish itching I have to blow the rascal's brains out, forms an absolute climax in favor of war-like hostility.—Sweet Charlotte!—here is confusion to the dog that ruined you, though 'pon my honor, thou lookest all the better for it."

As Milwood had taken no kind of notice of the quarrel in which he had left Lord Southby engaged;—it would have been strange if this unconnected rhapsody had not led to a conclusion in the minds of the auditors, that Sir Samuel Belford, and not Sir Timothy Mortimer, was

the intended companion of next morning's excursion, and as his Lordship never once thought an error of so trivial a nature was worthy an explanation, the Captain felt his sunk courage revive on the supposition, that the man he most dreaded, was in so fair a way of being satisfactorily disposed of; he therefore, whispered his compliance with the request made him, and that too with what was rather unusual with him, a serious intention of fulfilling his promise. The Earl did not, however, enter into the spirit of the business with similar views, nor did his extreme alarm for his son's safety preclude an earnest endeavour to investigate the cause;—much as he had been taught to despise the character of the baronet, what

what had been just told him by Milwood, had stirred up so powerful an advocate in his favor, that his opinion became balanced, whilst the present willingness of the Captain to second the intention of his son, placed the inconsistency of the latter gentleman's conduct in a strong point of view; in consequence, he insisted on a categorical answer to what he had previously proposed, prior to every other consideration.

Southby, who had somehow paid more than wonted attention to this determined proposition of his father, saw with much surprise, the awkward dilemma into which the Captain was thrown, and though he neither understood nor wished to understand the meaning of the Earl's words,

yet he felt interested in the issue, and with a hasty exclamation, enquired, whether Fairfax hesitated to give his father satisfaction ?

“ I never refuse to grant every proper satisfaction,” replied the officer, forcing a stern defiance into his aspect, “ but in the present instance there is a delicacy ——”

“ D——n the delicacy,” interrupted Southby, “ no man shall treat my father ill and plaister it up with *delicacy*.”

“ Here !” and pulling out a brace of pistols from his pocket, and tossing one of them across the table, with just the same indifference as if it had been an orange.

“ Take that, defend yourself—and—

“ Curse be he that first cries hold ;—enough.”

Fairfax,

Fairfax, roused by the threat, grasped the deadly instrument, and following the example of his opponent, levelled it at his head.

At this critical moment, when the two young men were on the point of dismissing one another from this world of sorrow, and the Earl of Wellford sat stupefied with horror and alarm, the door again opened, and the arm of Lord Southby was suddenly arrested from its purpose by the activity of the person who entered.

“What means this posture?” demanded the person, with an air of authority: is life given to be sported away in this unworthy

unworthy manner?—Ah ! what do I see ?” cried he, starting, “ my brother and my friend, armed against each other’s life ; and in the heat of passion, thwarting the regular course of providence, by a deed from which nature shrinks, which on its completion gratifies not the survivor, but, on the contrary, entails on him endless regret and misery.”

The Earl, recovering from his alarm, viewed the stranger with a surprise, mingled with tenderness ;—he saw in his looks and person something which recalled the warmest emotion in his bosom, and the suddenness of his appearance, joined to the intrepidity of his behaviour, carried with them an irresistible claim on his paternal feelings.

“ *Brother !*

“ *Brother!* did you say,” said the Earl, tenderly taking the stranger by the hand, “ if Lord Southby is your brother—heavens! in what affinity stand I to you?”

“ Had not the information given me, previous to my entrance, determined this,” replied the stranger, whilst his eye glistered with sensibility, “ there is something within me that loudly speaks out—you are my father!”

“ And you are my child, Edmund,” uttered the Earl, with an empaffioned vehemence.—Edmund dropt on his knee, and the father clasping him in his arms, burst into tears.

Southby

Southby swore it was d—n'd *insipid*, and telling the Captain he might depend on soon hearing from him, pocketed the weapons, and marched out of the room, followed by Fairfax, who, utterly confounded at the appearance and behaviour of Edmund, dreaded the shock of an explanation more than ever;—as for the honest agent, he felt so little inclination to renew the dispute with Southby, that he had sagaciously retired on the first appearance of that nobleman.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVII.

A retrospective view of some illustrating occurrences.

THE state of convalescence in which we left Edmund at the inn, may naturally have led the reader to conceive the most favorable ideas on the issue of his distemper; but unhappily for his peace, his recollection gathered strength in proportion to his mental and bodily restoration, and his memory, once awakened to a sense of what had passed previous, and even during his illness, tenaciously maintained and even

even magnified them beyond their proper severity; his reflections were aggravated too by the desertion of his friend Fairfax, joined to that gentleman's behaviour at Wellford Lodge, an exact account of which had been conveyed to him by his steward, nor did the information he now received of Charlotte add to the serenity of his thoughts. That lady had been seen leaning on the arm of Sir Samuel Belford, in one of the streets of London, by a gentleman who knew the parties; and who, on his return into the country, had propagated the news in a manner that soon reached the ears of him who was the most interested, losing nothing in the course of its circulation.

Such

Such things had better have been forgot for ever ; but there is a something in the system of man, which fixes the attention on those things which tend only to aggravate the native melancholy of the mind, and twists even gratifying occurrences to loathing and dissatisfaction ; such was at least the effect produced in the temperament of Edmund.

“ I would be happy if I could ;” would he say, in reply to the kind suggestions of his faithful valet, who, of all others, was the most assiduous in his endeavours, and sincerest in his wishes for his perfect recovery. “ But much I have still to suffer, Joseph,” would he add, with a sigh, “ before those heavy clouds that obscure
the

the atmosphere of my peace are dispelled, and the tranquillity once enjoyed is restored to my bosom;" then, whilst the tear stole down his pale cheek, he would sink into thought, or talk wild and incoherent.

The thought of returning home was of all others the least pleasing;—the magnet of attraction that wont to render Wellford Lodge delectable was gone, the semblance of every object had changed, and nothing but ideas of discomfort promised to arise from appearances so changed and so woe-begone—yet in the place where he now was, no inducement presented itself, nor did a necessary economy admit of a long continuance. He there-

fore

fore settled every thing with a liberality that gave great satisfaction; dispatched home all his servants, excepting Joseph, without whom the world would indeed have been an insupportable confusion, and with whom he took his departure for London; not that, in the bustle and variety of that place, he flattered himself in the supposition of either alleviating or dispelling the anxiety of his mind;—all places, in this particular, were equally deficient in allurements; equally destitute of those soothing qualities that might have charmed the turbulence of his passions, and gently thrown a veil over the objects of his sorrow. He was as yet too weak to join in the active service of his regiment. It was, therefore, simply his wish

to

to seclude himself for a time from the observation of the world, as well as from the condolence of acquaintances, who delight in enumerating the different sources of grief, and harrow up the sufferings, only that they may pay a fulsome compliment to their own sagacity and fellow feelings.

Far they had not proceeded on this journey, when, on the entrance of a common, and when the chaise had halted to repair a trivial accident that had happened to some part of the harness, an old woman earnestly solicited his attention,—her husband, she said, was on the point of death, but could not die contented, without having first disclosed a secret that
tormented

tormented him.—“ I have sworn to him,” added the poor creature, “ that I will disclose the whole after his decease, but this gives him no comfort ;—will you, then, your honor, deign to render the last moments of a miserable old man tranquil, by merely listening to what he has to relate ?”

Edmund quitted the chaise ; he had still an ear open to the minutest breathings of distress, and a heart ready to co-operate with the delicacy of every bodily organ—it may be truly said, that it was the first time, since he left his home, that a pleasurable sensation entered his bosom, and he followed the old matron more obliged by far than obliging.—They entered a little
wretched

wretched hovel, and by the glimmerings of light that penetrated through the thatch of this wretched abode, he perceived the husband of the wretch he followed.—He seated himself on the side of the bed, where the sick-man lay—whilst the woman explained the nature of the visit.

“ I have been a sad fellow, that is true,” said the husband, “ as you may suppose, when I inform you, Sir, that I have all my long life, followed the profession of a tinker. There is, however, one act, amidst the many ungainly ones I have perpetrated, which bears hard against my conscience.—Listen to me, I pray thee, and the last blessing of a dying man reward your condescension.”

“ Some

“Some eighteen years ago, as my wife and I were travelling in the country, as it was our constant custom, we arrived at the entrance of an avenue that led to a spacious mansion,—the gate was open, and we had scarcely got on the inside, when a beautiful child attracted our notice,—it lay playing on the grass, and its nurse sitting by it fast asleep; the richness of the infant’s dress was a temptation to wretches like us, brought up to pilfering and idleness, which our limited notions of honesty could not withstand—not a creature, but the sleeping nurse, was to be seen,—we snatched up the babe, and preventing its crying by tying a handkerchief over its mouth, soon reached a wood in the vicinity, where, having stript and new

altered the child, and tainted its skin with a particular dye, well known to our fraternity, even the parents themselves, much as they might have lamented the loss, could not have known the object of their lamentation. Notwithstanding such precaution, still a dread of detection haunted us; and we left the country, not only to avoid apprehension, but with a view of disposing of the valuables we had obtained.—On the journey, the little girl was a great help to us, as it gave us a plea of necessity irresistible, when urged judiciously. In London we had a daughter, who, from bad example, had, at an early period, taken to a vicious life; to her we told our story, and she took a great liking to the child; and indeed, well she might, for

for it was the sweetest best conditioned babe under the sun.—Often used she to carry little Charlotte, (for so we called her, from a name wrought in the corner of her handkerchief,) abroad with her in her walks, as she said it was an attraction to gentlemen, and seldom failed to excite curiosity,—for our daughter was still very young, too young, they said, to be the mother of Charlotte, and this remark generally brought on conversation, which her skill turned to advantage.—A young woman, who lodged in the same house, grew jealous of the preference thus obtained by our daughter, and having under a plausible pretence obtained leave to carry little Charlotte out one evening, at once deprived us of what was so dear to us.

She returned without our little girl, and pretended that the child had been forced from her arms by two men, who previously knocked her down ;—but the truth afterwards came out from the observation of one of her companions, who had witnessed the frolick, as they termed it ; from which it appeared that so far was the child from being forcibly taken from her, that she had absolutely ran off and left it in the arms of a drunken gentleman, whom she had enticed into the snare.—Sensible of our own guilt, we durst not complain of this ;—and time had almost obliterated our loss, till one day, in passing through one of the great squares, we saw little Charlotte playing at the door of a fine house ——”

“ That

“That is what we did,” interrupted the old woman, “and as fine she was as when we first stole her, and so gay a madam there was attending her, as your honor can’t think!”——“Hold your prattle, dame” said the husband, “you know at that time, your folly would have discovered us, had not I pulled you away; though I now wish I had not done so.—But you seem uneasy, Sir—we are indeed very troublesome.”

“Go on!” cried Edmund, glowing with impatience and amazement——“but first tell me if you know, to whom the house, you have just mentioned, at that time belonged?”

“That,” replied the old man, “I learnt a few days after, when we ventured again into the neighbourhood;—it was the town residence of the Earl of Wellford.”

The story told by old Thompson rushed on the memory of Edmund.—The time, the place, and the striking connexion between that and the present recital, strongly corroborated both, and convinced him, beyond a possibility of doubt, that Charlotte was the child thus separated from her own family, and thus connected with his own.

“But what is Charlotte to me?” cried he, with a sigh, “the time indeed was,
when

when such a discovery would have made me happy ;—but that time is past.—Proceed.—I am all attention.”

“ I have nearly finished,” said the sick man ; “ my wish was to disclose this part of my villainy, before my death, in the hope that the innocent victim of my barbarity, may, by such means, be restored to her relations, and my sins be forgiven me! —Will you, then, my dear young gentleman, promise to use your endeavours for this purpose ?”

“ With whom is such an endeavour to be used?” demanded Edmund, all agitated, “ or how is a proposition from me to be credited, if made unsubstantiated by any other evidence than my bare assertion ?”

H 4

“ I will

“ I will take my sacrament on the truth of what I have advanced,” said the wretch, “ and my wife will confirm it before any Justice in the kingdom.”

“ That’s what I will,” cried the old woman, “ for I have often and often said as how it was a main pity that such a good young gentleman as Sir Samuel should be kept without the knowledge of having a sister.”

“ *Sir Samuel!*” repeated Edmund, starting, in a kind of prophetic anticipation of what was to follow—say—speak—what Sir Samuel do you allude to?”

“ Sir Samuel Belford,” answered the man; “ we stole the child from the dis-
consolate

consolate arms of the parents of him we have named: Charlotte was his only sister."

"O heaven!" exclaimed Edmund, "what a task is here imposed on me, and what misery will my communication inflict on those, who, but a few weeks ago, would have received it with rapture!—still I think too highly of both, to imagine that there is direct criminality in their connection,—yet connected they assuredly are, and though the church may have sanctioned it—incest—black, d—n'd incest—must again tear atunder the bonds of mutual felicity, and disunite the tie of happiness they may fondly have concluded permanent.—My soul delighteth not in triumphing over the unfortunate, nor in

rejoicing o'er the fall of an ungenerous rival, why—why then is this dreadful task reserved for me?"

"Your honor seems to have some knowledge of the families I have mentioned?" said the man.

"Had I known them less, I had been more happy," replied Edmund.

"If you know Miss Charlotte," observed the old woman, "your honor must have taken notice of a remarkable strawberry mark just under her left ear, I could swear to it amongst an hundred—and if any of the clothes are preserved, that she had on when that wicked slut parted from
her

her, I think I could swear to them, above all to a purple sash, with the initials C. B. wrought in golden thread on it—she had it on when we stole her, and we had never parted with it.”

“ All this may be brought in proof hereafter,” said Edmund, “ let our first care be of your husband—his life is highly essential to be preserved.”

Joseph, who accompanied his master, now took the hand of the sick wretch, and after examining his pulse and his tongue, accompanying the acts with some appropriate interrogations, in the usual style,—declared that the patient’s illness proceeded more from a want of adequate nutrition

and spirits, than from any actual bodily ailment—and this opinion being supported by a confession of extreme poverty by the party, measures were instantly taken that a suitable remedy might be administered.

The mind of the old man having been much relieved by this confession, from the oppression it had so long laboured under, and positive assurances having been given him, that no personal danger would result in consequence, the regimen of Joseph had fair play, and in a few days produced the desired effect.

This period had been passed by Edmund at a neighbouring inn, in a state of undescribable inquietude, and as soon as the
man

man had recovered sufficient strength, he accompanied him to a neighbouring Justice, by whom the strange confession was regularly taken down and attested, as a security at once against a relapse of sickness, and any idea of recantation which might probably suggest itself in the mind of such a wretch,—he accompanied this transaction with a liberal gratuity, and sat off for London, where he soon after arrived.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Containing various matter not unworthy
perusal.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the strong concurrence in the evidence, the testimony of the Earl of Wellford was, in the opinion of Edmund, still wanting to establish the claim of Charlotte to the privileges of her birth—a strong natural inclination too, impelling him to the measure, he determined immediately to visit his father.—Stranger, however, to his person, he judged it expedient to solicit an introduction through

through the medium of his brother, and consequently went to his Lordship's house. —His Lordship was just gone to Covent Garden, and though Edmund trusted but little to the aid or even commiseration of so volatile a relation, yet his present anxiety was such, that he followed him to a place so ill affimulating with his thoughts, and appeared in the lobby, on the critical moment, in which Sir Samuel Belford entered it with Charlotte.—The sudden and unexpected sight of this lady so familiarly supported in the arms of his rival, stirred up in his bosom a tumult of sensations at once opposite and excruciating, it was a conflux of love, pity and resentment, amidst the turbulence of which even reason tottered, and well accounted for the sad dejection

jection of his outward appearance, as it struck the eye of Charlotte; scarcely knowing where his feet carried him, he fled from objects so detrimental to all his prospects of happiness, and found himself soon after in a coffee-house, attended by the faithful Joseph, who had watched his steps, and now administered such cordials, as soon calmed the perturbation of his spirits, and brought back a tolerable degree of composure.

At the door of the theatre, Joseph had accidentally met Larkins, the valet of Lord Southby, and from him had learnt some particulars regarding the situation of the Earl of Wellford's pecuniary affairs, prior to the favorable turn given thereto, by the
good

good offices of the Baronet, to which, indeed, this trusty adherent was a total stranger;—to amuse and draw the attention of his master from contemplating on things so hurtful—Joseph communicated this intelligence, and Edmund, without a hesitating thought, resolved instantly to throw himself at his father's feet, and endeavour to relieve his distress, at the expence of his own fortune.—Joseph procured a coach, and with a beam of internal satisfaction illuming the mind of Edmund, on the prospect of snatching a father from ruin, he arrived at his lodgings.

Like a stream, whose natural course has been checked by some casual impediment, was the torrent of returning affection, in
the

the bosom of Lord Wellford, to its native channel, its impetuosity encreased by the stoppage of its original motion, now swept before it every opposing particle.—He prest his amiable son in his arms—he wept over him—a recollection of his mother, of her patience, and of her sufferings, served only to link the chain of endearment, the more strong and permanent.

The senior son, as has before been said, not entering into the spirit of this play of the passions, declared upon oath to the insipidity of the *thing*, and left them to the full enjoyment of a scene so exquisite.—Edmund, as soon as words became articulate, frankly declared the immediate cause of this unprefaced visit, and the father, with his

his heart throbbing with gratitude, disclosed his actual situation with equal candour and unreserve, the occasional mention of Sir Samuel Belford, in this declaration touched the delicate fibre of poor Edmund's sorrow,—he dropt again on his knee, and pressing the hand of his father to his lips, implored him to satisfy his remaining doubt in regard to the birth of Charlotte.—The Earl raised him up, and endeavouring to conceal the tear that pity forced down his cheek, repeated in substance what the reader is already possessed of, if trouble sufficient has been taken to peruse the epistle of Dr. Jennings to his *ci-devant* pupil.—Edmund in return related all the particulars that had come to his knowledge.;—mingling the recital with
the

the tenderest starts of passion and love,—and the most pointed testimony of the agony and horror he felt at the present situation of one for whom he must ever retain the tenderest attachment.

The Earl, who considered the whole with more coolness and precision, drew the most favourable arguments from the character of the parties,—that their connection might still be of that species which the circumstances of the case rendered unavoidable, and the strictest rules of propriety might warrant, and even flattered his son with the prospect of an *eclaircissement* terminating all his inquietudes.

Edmund looked placidly into his father's face, and with a prophetic concurrence,

not

not with his father's meaning, but words ;
—exclaimed,—“ yes, my dear father, the
sad inquietudes of your son will then ter-
minate he trusts, and peace and happiness
once more be his ; ”—but where is my bro-
ther? The Earl started,—the presence of
Edmund had driven from his thoughts
the dangerous intentions expressed by Lord
Southby, but they now recurred with
double force.—His Lordship had left the
house, none knew where,—and the idea
of his being joined in the quarrel by Fair-
fax, heightened the Earl's apprehensions,
as he had now conceived the very worst
opinion of his principles, and was there-
fore led to a belief that this gentleman's
interests were diametrically opposed to the
safety of his own family.—Edmund, who
had

had so many recent proofs of the sad *falling off* of this quondam friend, could not with propriety oppose the arguments of his father, nor attempt to conceal his own dread of his brother's danger; and readily in consequence joined his endeavours, in order to prevent the intended meeting,—as for the fracas that had taken place in presence of the Earl, they looked on it the mere effect of Southby's inebriation, which he would in all probability never once reflect on, nor think of prosecuting farther, or, if he did, the well known prudence of his adversary would prove a sufficient bar against the issue being rendered alarming.—The first care was to lodge the necessary information at the nearest public office, from whence proper officers were ordered to

to be timeously on the heath mentioned by Southby, to give the necessary interference, whilst others were instantly dispatched in search of the offending parties, and arrest their persons under authority of warrants granted for these purposes.—These precautions taken, Edmund was directed to the lodgings of Fairfax, with a view to learn farther particulars, whilst the Earl drove to the house of his senior son,—this last was but a needless taking up of time, home, being of all other places, the least likely to find his Lordship at such an hour.—Lady Southby saw company indeed this very night, and the door was now surrounded with carriages, but it by no means followed that her consort was to domesticate himself a whole night on so frivolous
an

an occasion ;—nor was Edmund more lucky in his enquiry of the Captain, Mrs. Fairfax could give no kind of information ; nor, from the manner of his departure, did she expect his speedy return.—This visit of Edmund, however, so changed in his manner and external appearance, both surprised and shocked her.—The cruel desertion of the man of her heart, the dreaded censure of the world, and the awakened sense of the many improprieties in her own conduct, now tempered her feelings to a sympathetic unison with the woe of others ; and the present situation of this once happy young man, now forcibly appealed to her understanding :—from Lady Southby she had received a confused account of the effect produced on his
mind

mind by the elopement of Charlotte, (in which she had borne so large a share) from the false construction put on it, and she could not forego such a favourable opportunity as now presented itself to do away ideas so prejudicial to all concerned.

Edmund reluctantly seated himself on the promise of Mrs. Fairfax communicating something nearly concerning him,—but when the name of Charlotte was mentioned in the very opening of the relation,—his brother was drove from his thoughts and he listened with the most eager attention.—She freely confessed the imposition she herself had practised on him,—the motives that had induced her—the whole of the proceedings in which she had participated

anticipated at Wellford Lodge,—the reasons that had produced the abrupt departure of Charlotte—and above all, the truly chaste and honorable connection that subsisted between her and Sir Samuel Belford, on whom she bestowed the highest encomium and praise.—The youth heard an explanation, which his own recollection stamped with truth in many particulars, and on the whole had every symptom of authenticity, with a rapture inconceivable; the transition from melancholy sadness to the extreme exhilaration of spirits proved nearly too much,—he uttered a tremulous sigh, and but for the timely exertion of Mrs. Fairfax, would have sunk on the floor,—she supported him in her arms, and her maid, whom her cries brought to her assistance,

assistance, administered a volatile essence, which soon again brought back pulsation : at this moment Fairfax entered ;—the Captain had settled every thing necessary with Lord Southby amicably, in regard to their own personal quarrel, and was now returned merely for his pistols, articles requisite for the excursion of the morning.—Thunder-struck with the unaccountable appearance before him ;—the pretended jealousy formerly declared by the Captain was now kindled into reality, and the instruments of death, just put into his hands by his groom, would have instantly rid him of objects now doubly hateful to his sight, had not Edmund now sufficiently recovered to perceive the danger, snatched the pistol from his hand, and turning it

against him with eyes darting infinite scorn and contempt, demanded the reason of such a threatening posture?—Fairfax foiled in what he termed his revenge, had recourse to his usual duplicity—he pretended the greatest satisfaction at seeing Edmund—whom, in the blindness of passion, he had mistaken for one whom he had lately had some strong reasons to suspect had overcome the fidelity of his wife.—Clarissa scorned to reply to this base insinuation, but retiring shut herself up in another room to give vent to the contest of passion that filled her bosom.

The presence of the Captain recalling to Edmund the object of his visit—he gave up for the present every other subject
of

of discussion.—The Captain finding his wishes run the contrary way, positively denied having seen Lord Southby since they left Earl Wellford's apartments, or had in any way engaged to accompany him in the morning.—Edmund, who could not dispute this statement, and who felt highly gratified on the supposition of its truth, took his leave, even flattering himself on the promise made by Fairfax, that every other point of doubt would be cleared up on their next meeting would prove verified.

CHAP. XXXIX.

*Fatal terminations are but too often the
fruit of inconsiderate beginnings.*

EDMUND found his father just returned after a fruitless search; he succinctly related what he himself had discovered, and although it was then near morning, agreed with the Earl on the propriety of immediately waiting on Sir Samuel Belford, whose place of residence the narrative of Clarissa had disclosed.— They found the baronet but just returned—the strong impression made on the spirits

rits of Charlotte by the untoward circumstances attending her visit to the Theatre, had nearly proved fatal, and it had required the utmost efforts of the ladies, as well as all the exerted pleasantry of Sir Samuel, to restore her to a tolerable state of composure.

Unseasonable as this visit was, and little as he imagined the name of Earl Wellford was to form the prelude to congratulation only, he had no notion of being denied, but received his visitants with an ease that testified the inward sense of rectitude that accompanied his actions.

The joy he felt on seeing Edmund, and on seeing him in the company of his father,

ther, was extreme; his inquisitive and penetrating eye not finding those direful testimonials of mental disturbance he had been led to expect in the countenance of his friend, added to his satisfaction, and his heart throbbed for a renewal of that intercourse and familiarity which had for a short period so kindly subsisted between them.

The Earl explained the nature of their unseasonable call, and the baronet, with equal frankness, declared his total ignorance of the circumstance that had produced it, and in consequence, a mutual belief arose, that the whole was the mere effect of Lord Southby's unaccountable humour; or, at best, but the prognostic
of

of what he had in the heat of his temper intended should be,—not what was actually determined upon. It is easy to forgive an imposition, when its discovery relieves the mind from anxiety. The Earl, therefore, with his wonted good humour, only smiled at what he termed his son's levity, and blinded by a false security, determined to consign the whole to oblivion. His Lordship, in consequence, freed from the previous oppression, recovered his usual good humour, and recalling a sense of the obligation he lay under to the baronet, endeavoured to return appropriate thanks; Sir Samuel, with more self-denial than veracity, generously imputed the whole merit to Charlotte, to whose conduct he had simply acted as agent. The mention of

a name so highly revered, brought on an animated conversation, in which all that had come to light in regard to this charming girl, with the exception of what so nearly related to the baronet, was freely communicated; Sir Samuel properly prepared for this last information, the Earl asked him, whether he did not think in the event of their being able to trace out the young lady's family, she ought, not merely on account of her sufferings, to be doubly dear to them.

The baronet, who saw more in the manner of his Lordship than his words seemed to import, and whose soul yearned with unusual hopes, replied, "that certainly Charlotte's having been so early deprived

of the intercourse and society of those bound by nature's ties to have succoured and protected her, (however such wants and claims had been softened by the humanity of those into whose kind hands she had ultimately fallen) ought to have a sensible effect on the reception she had to meet with in the event of her restoration.—“This is not an undigested opinion,” added he, “for once I had a sister, who, in early infancy, was lost—unaccountably lost—through the negligence of a nurse;—scarcely do I remember the circumstance, but deep was the impression which the grief of our parents afterwards made on my memory.—Was this lost sister yet alive, and were heaven so pleased as to point her out to me; in me she would find all that a brother should be.—I would wear

her in my heart, and my arm would ward off the blow of the betrayer."

"Then let us take up the supposition," said the Earl, smiling, whilst his son stood wrapt in extacy, which circumstances seemed to warrant, "and imagine that if this sister, so long lost and so much lamented, was found in the person of our favourite Charlotte!—how would the discovery operate?"

"As the harmonic music of angels on the ethereal spirits of the *just*," exclaimed Sir Samuel, in a transport. "The last words of my parents were to remember their loss, and to provide for my sister, if ever she was discovered; nature confirmed
this

this injunction, and were I to find her ignorant and unadorned, it would be my chiefest care to do away the sad effects of the want of education; and the sad want I would have imputed to the right cause, and said to her, '*now be thou happy!*' but to find her in Charlotte!—the accomplished—the angelic Charlotte!—O heavens! the bare idea is rapture undescribable; it would concentrate all my wishes, and would complete my earthly felicity, by giving me the pleasure of calling Edmund brother."

"Then be thou blest!" cried Edmund, presenting the attested paper already mentioned, "and let thy influence over a sister so amiable, render me blest also."

Sir

Sir Samuel read the paper in mute astonishment, his extacy was too great for utterance, but falling on the neck of Edmund testified it in some measure by his tears.

“ I have, in the course of my peregrination through life,” cried he, after recovering himself a little, “ had my portion of those joys that smoothe the rugged path of mortals ;—but this is so sudden and so far surpassing my ideas of satisfaction, that d—n me if I know what to make of it,” —and indeed his succeeding agitation denoted that he did not,—for whilst he capered about the room with infinite agility, his intentions kept equal pace in regard to steadiness—he would fly instantly—he
swore

swore, and disclose the whole to his sister, —it was cruel to keep her one moment longer unacquainted with the discovery— but then the effect on a constitution so delicate, if unprefaced with suitable precaution,—it would be better to write to her—he called for pen and ink—it was a confounded cold and formal method—and he disposed of the implements under the grate.—His Lordship would in his opinion be the fittest for a communication so delicate—yet that would be going so far round—Edmund was the man—had he been less interested—his cousin would be the thing itself—but why subject her to the task, whilst Mrs. Fairfax had a better command of her passions and possessed equal confidence.—There was however a
Captain

Captain Fairfax—Sir Samuel bit his lip at the unpleasant recollection;—and then with a face of seriousness declared his first determination was—to go to bed.

His two visitors took so reasonable a hint, and retired, mutually congratulating one another on the result, and full of the most pleasant expectations of future felicity. The morning was pretty far advanced, and the laborious part of the community had already begun the toils of the day, before they reached the Hotel.—“What can be the meaning of all this?” said the Earl;—a crowd of people had surrounded the door, and a buzz of general enquiry seemed to predict some eventful accident.—The master of the house

house met them in the hall.—“ Lord Southby,” said he, “ is ——”

“ *Dead!*” interrupted the Earl, in a wild note of exclamation, “ the spectre of the destroyer of earthly happiness stands depicted in your countenance,”—The man shook his head,—and Lord Wellford followed him with a tremulous step.

Let us, however, arrest the attention of the reader, in order to prepare him, in some degree, to participate in the scene that now opened to the Earl and Edmund.

Lord Southby, on quitting the presence of his father, had gone to the next coffee-house,

house, to which he was followed by Fairfax, who, in the anxious hope of being revenged on Sir Samuel Belford, readily explained away the momentary difference that had just taken place, and tendered his service in the business of the morning. Southby gladly accepted both the explanation and the proffer; and it was not till after the Captain had furnished himself with his pistols, that he discovered the mistake he lay under in regard to the gentleman they were to oppose;—this altered the case—mischief for the mere sake of itself formed no part of this officer's plan of operations:—the issue of a quarrel with Sir Timothy Mortimer, was to him a matter of such total indifference that he instantly became cool in the business, and
feizing

seizing the first occasion that occurred to oppose the sentiments of Southby, soon produced an altercation that furnished a plausible pretext for giving up all share in the transaction,—nay, he would have made a merit of this change of opinion, by laying as much of the matter as suited his purpose, immediately before the Earl of Wellford, but, unluckily, that nobleman was not to be found.

Southby, now left to himself, prepared for the solemn event with a careless stoicism, that would have done honor to a hero of ancient Rome—that is, he dropt into a profound sleep, from which a waiter, to whom he had given previous instructions, found it difficult to awake him.—

He

He now set out on foot for his own house, where Larkins was sitting up for him, and who in a few minutes procured him a chaise. The last of Lady Southby's visitants was but just gone, and her Ladyship just entered the room, with symptoms of extreme lassitude to observe how much she was astonished; that her Lord should keep such late hours. Southby retaliated this charge with rather more justice than the Lady choosed to own, and a sharp altercation would, no doubt, have taken place, had not Larkins prevented it, by informing his master, that every thing was ready.—“Let us part in harmony, however,” said his Lordship, taking the hand of his Lady, “we may not, perhaps, meet again soon.”

“*And*

“ And what of all that ? ” cried Lady Southby, yawning.

“ Nothing ! ” replied Southby, “ since you, madam, to whom I have sacrificed so much, are so little interested about what so nearly concerns me.”

“ Come—don’t say that however,” observed she, repairing the ravages which the fatigues of the evening had made on the tincture of her cheeks, by the aid of a rouge box which she generally carried in her pocket, “ for be thou assured, in the event of any accident, such as the loss of a leg, an arm, or such a thing as that, I should be so sorry,—but the circumstance of your death,—L—d ! I should

should never get over it,—every thing would be so dismal—nothing but fables—horrid!—the very idea makes me heavy—sleepy—so pray, my dear creature be gone—good-bye!—remember your poor wife, and be careful of yourself for her sake.”

“ *Humph!*” said Southby, to whom a tear of anxiety would have been rather more acceptable, than this oral display of his Lady’s affection; he turned on his heel, and, with a weight on his spirits, and a seriousness in his aspect, very unusual, he quitted the house, whilst her Ladyship never once imagining that her conduct or levity weighed heavy in the scale of his uneasiness, went quietly to bed.

The

The myrmidons of justice, though they had failed in their search for Lord Southby, had unluckily found out not only the lodgings of Sir Samuel Belford, but that he himself was at home, and in company with their employer Lord Wellford; not on that account choosing to disturb him, they contented themselves with taking their station at an opposite ale-house, and still more unfortunately dispatching a messenger to relax the vigilance of their comrades, who had gone to watch the place of rendezvous;—in consequence of this, neither Lord Southby or his antagonist met the smallest interruption on the journey.

As Southby had come unattended, excepting by his servant; the friend of Sir
Timothy

Timothy declined all interference and management ; indeed, if he had acted contrary, it would have been to little purpose, for when parties meet mutually determined on the same object, it requires but little argument or mediation to settle the point.—They took their stations, and Lord Southby receiving the ball of the baronet in his groin, fatally terminated the dispute. Larkins ran to his assistance whilst the friend of Sir Timothy carelessly enquiring if he was hurt, deliberately handed the baronet into the chaise that he now beckoned towards them, and without waiting for a reply drove off.—“ Hurt !” repeated Southby, as he sunk on one knee :—“ hurt I am, and that’s the English on’t, and yet that *rat-catcher* is
gone

gone off without a scratch—help to stop this blood, Larkins; the wound on my conscience, I think is not ‘*So deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but ’tis enough,—’twill serve,—I am pepper’d, I warrant for this world;—he has made worms meat of me.*’

A surgeon, who lived in the vicinity, was, by the activity of the post-boy, soon brought to the spot, and under his care his Lordship was conducted, in a state of insensibility, to the residence of his father, that being not only much nearer than his own, but judged by his valet better adapted for convenience than home in the present situation of things.

CHAP. XL.

In which these Memoirs take a still more serious turn.

OTHER medical assistance having been called in, the ball had in vain been searched for, and symptoms of an alarming nature had followed the ineffectual operation;—it was at this moment that the Earl entered the apartment.

Lord Southby, weakened and faint from loss of blood as he was, had now again recovered the use of his reason and reflection;

tion; the heat of wine, and the turbulence of his misguided passions, no longer usurped the seat of his understanding,—he awoke to the exercise of serious thought, as from a long and heavy slumber, during which, the fancy had sported with folly and delusive images: he now looked back, without satisfaction, to a period so lost; and he looked forward with awe to a change for which he was unprepared, and with which he was totally unacquainted. In this situation of thought, he saw his father hang over his bed, and felt the warm tear of paternal agony moisten his hand: the current of sensibility, hitherto checked by those rude impediments, formed by a want of proper cultivation, now seemed to flow in its na-

tive channel, even contrition for past errors, mingled with the sorrow he felt for his rashness ; and he prest the hand of his father in silence.

The arrival of a gentleman who stood foremost in the rank of practitioners in surgery, suspended for a moment the sad anxiety of the Earl and of Edmund, and even flattered them with the hope that his Lordship would reap immediate benefit from such additional skill ; but this hope was fallacious and only served to aggravate the sense of the awful certainty that ensued. The ball had taken a direction which they neither could trace nor palliate in its effect.

“ Do

"Do not sorrow for me," said he, alternately pressing the hands of his father and brother, "I have been wild, headstrong, and inconsiderate, and this misfortune is the consequence of my own folly."

"O Southby!" exclaimed the agonized father, "say, rather, the sad effect of my want of attention; had I formed your mind on principles requisite for the good government of your conduct, this had never happened."

"You are in possession of a son trained up in such principles!" said Southby, joining the hands of Edmund and his father; "long have I stood in the way of this reconciliation, but I am sorry for

it; and I think my brother is too generous to brand my memory with my want of affection."

Edmund sealed his forgiveness with his tears, he tried to comfort and cheer him, and when the Earl was forced from the room, by the advice of the surgeons, Edmund sat by his brother, and tenderly awakened him to a just sense of his situation.

"Your words are balm to my soul," said he, "and I am all resignation—do not weep Edmund."—"I would not if I could help it," answered his brother; "but you know I am composed of this foolish softness." Southby grasped his
hand

hand still closer.—Edmund felt the pulse flutter—it grew weaker—it stopt—the eye that intensely gazed on him, lost its expression, and death testified its sad visitation, by every corresponding accompaniment.

“Close be the veil drawn over thy imperfections,” cried Edmund, with a heart-rending sigh, “and may calumny, checked by this direful expiation, leave thy virtues to flourish round thy tomb.”

Quick indeed was the transition which the surviving brother thus experienced from the extremity of earthly joy, to the sorrowful contemplation of the dead—he looked on the cold remains, and even

Charlotte became absorbed in the conflux of his grief; from this piteous employment he was, however, rudely diverted by the entrance of Lady Southby; her Ladyship had heard the lamentable report of the duel, and without even staying to be dressed, had hurried to the hotel; and in all the outward appearance of disconsolation, threw herself on the bed. Edmund tried to comfort her, by arguments which, on himself failed to operate, he taught her to become reconciled to this stroke of providence, whilst he himself was miserable.

“ I would have thought the less of it,” exclaimed she, with rather more calmness than Edmund expected, “ had the world
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had less occasion to speculate ;—yet, what of all that ?—the world—and that is my consolation,—shall find that I loved my Lord,—ey, and that I venerate his memory ; as the first great proof of which I will never—no never—speak to that vile Sir Timothy more—no, were he to fall on his knees, and supplicate my forgiveness ; the recollection of my loss ——but I must not trifle here—our affairs are all at fixes and sevens ; and it will require no small portion of ingenuity to adjust matters as they should be, considering the whole family must be put in mourning.”

“ Let that expence be mine !” cried Edmund.——“ Granted !” said she, with a complacent nod of approbation, and
K 5 declaring

declaring that she was positively shocked beyond all possible conception, withdrew with the same rapidity she had entered, adding to the declaration, as she stepped into the carriage, that the *thing* was perfectly terrible, and beyond what human prudence could support.

With the Earl of Wellford, poor Edmund had a still more serious task to perform; the first transports of his grief being extreme, against the keen operation of which, reason or argument acted without effect;—endeavours to mitigate this extravagant grief, when dictated by the tenderest filial sincerity, had at last the wished for effect, and his Lordship was reduced to more composure and submis-

sion

sion to a blow so unexpected ;—as yet indeed they had but an imperfect knowledge of the sad transaction ; Lord Southby's situation having been judged too dangerous to have this point pressed on him. The arrival, however, of Mr. Milwood, who, as has been mentioned, had been present at the commencement of the quarrel, fully explained the mistake they had lain under ; and the arrival also of Captain Fairfax, furnished all that was necessary to be known. During this last information, Fairfax endeavoured to justify his own conduct, not only in regard to the immediate subject, but in some past occurrences, where it stood in a still more suspicious point of view ; but the power of his sophistical reasoning was gone, and

the weight of his alleged innocence was as nothing in the ballance, when opposed to the ponderosity of his apparent guilt.

The Earl sternly told him, he had chosen a very improper time to justify what, in fact, had never been laid in charge against him.—And Edmund changing the languid softness of his eye into a look of scorn and contempt, turned from him in silence. Unable to combat symptoms of indignation so strongly manifesting the disgrace into which he had so justly fallen, he was retiring indignant, when, in the hall, he was met by Sir Samuel Belford.—They both started, but the motive of their surprise was very different.

The

The baronet had gone to bed full of the most agreeable reflections, and sleep having stole over his faculties, it was, very contrary to his usual custom, late in the day before he got up.—Charlotte, nearest to his heart, had occupied even his slumbers, and now claimed his whole attention; as he found it impossible to come to any determined resolution in regard to the best mode of disclosing their affinity, he went immediately to her apartments, leaving the issue to chance or any thing else that might occur.

“What have you done with our dear Charlotte?” demanded his cousin, as he entered the parlour.

“You

“ You mean, what do I intend to do for her, madam,” said he, crossing her question, with a smile.—“ But how?—What the deuce is this?”—You are alarmed !”

“ I thought some accident had happened to you,” replied Mrs. Martin, “ and to see you return unaccompanied by our sweet friend surprises me.”

“ And me too, on my soul !” exclaimed Sir Samuel, making but two steps to the room, where Charlotte generally sat—it was empty—a shade of pale apprehension o’ercast his countenance ;—he dreaded he knew not what, and he stood motionless.—His cousin now really alarmed, repeated

peated her first enquiry, with evident emotion, adding, that surely no mistake had happened.—“ You confound me !” cried Sir Samuel, “ there is an awful anxiety expressed in your looks, my cousin, which predicts unpropitiously, but let me have it.—Where is Charlotte ?”

“ I have just, and with much more propriety, asked that of you,” observed Mrs. Martin, “ you know she is abroad,—she went in consequence of your letter.”

“ *Of my letter ?*” cried he, with an astonishment unfeigned, “ then must I have wrote to her in my sleep.—It is true, in such moments of bodily inactivity, my busy fancy has oft found employ on so
sweet

sweet a subject;—but to write in my sleep, and to give validity to the act, by dispatching the epistle—goes beyond the common calculation of human ability.”

“ Here is the letter !” said she, presenting him with a paper. Sir Samuel took, or rather snatched it from the hand of his cousin, and read :—

“ My dearest Miss Southby,

“ An accident of the most unpropitious complexion has happened, which prevents my being at Mrs. Martin’s as soon as I could wish, in order to communicate some interesting particulars just come to my knowledge, relative to yourself and your brother, the unhappy Edmund ;

mund; if you have any curiosity to learn, what I assure you to be of too much importance to be entrusted to writing, confer on yourself the satisfaction that awaits you, and on me the greatest, and perhaps the last favor you can bestow, by coming to me immediately. The bearer, a gentleman of honor and an old and intimate acquaintance of mine, will conduct you in safety; and if my cousin accompanies you it will be still farther gratifying to,

Dear Madam,

Your's truly,

S. BELFORD."

"I think I am awake!" observed the baronet, "yet how pleasant would it be
to

to find this a dream ; nothing can bear a stronger resemblance to my hand writing, and yet nothing is more certain than that no person was less concerned in the fabrication of this epistle than myself ; but it has answered its purpose. I need make no farther inquiry ; your face, my cousin, speaks a language, more eloquent than a thousand tongues ;—it tells me, without preface, that Charlotte, in consequence of this d—n'd paper, trusted herself to the protection of this gentleman of *honor* and probity."

" She did !" replied Mrs. Martin, " I was not at home when it arrived, but if I had, I could not have advised a contrary conduct. The gentleman's own carriage,

carriage, I am told, stood at the door, and he painted your situation to be of so dangerous a kind, that to have hesitated, would have been a wretched requital for the manifold instances of your goodness and partiality."

The baronet begged for a glass of wine—the joy he had so lately promised himself fled, and his spirits underwent an unusual depression.—Mrs. Martin felt the shock now equally acute, for although, in the first instance, not a single doubt had arisen against the propriety of the step Charlotte had taken, a thousand circumstances now crowded on her memory, pointing out its rashness, and the mischief that might ensue;—still, however, she

she entertained a mingled hope, that the whole was a frolick, suited to the humour of some acquaintance, or in the worst that the virtue and prudence of the lady would surmount every attempt to destroy her peace, were any thing serious intended. Sir Samuel, however, from a better acquaintance with the ways of mankind, perceived nothing consolatory in such hopes; well judging that those who had taken such pains to get the lady in their power, had little of the sportive humour in the intention, nor would easily forego so manifest an advantage. His suspicions, in the first arrangement of his ideas, fell on Lord Southby, but a little consideration altered his opinion.—Poor Southby acted with too little circumspection to have

have formed a deliberate plan, or a plan in which so much art and finesse seemed displayed. Captain Fairfax, with every requisite feature of intrigue, had none of such contrary objections; on him, therefore, he fixed, and without waiting for the issue of Miss Southby's excursion, he resolved immediately to acquaint Earl Wellford and Edmund with the circumstance; in consequence of this resolve, it was that the meeting took place between him and the Captain.

CHAP. XLI.

*The Sun oft darts its most splendid rays
on the moment of its setting.*

“THE least expected, yet the man of all others, I wished most to see;” said Sir Samuel Belford.

“And yet,” observed Fairfax, “the man of all others, the features of whose countenance, on a late occasion, so shocked the extreme delicacy of your ocular sense.”

“Those

“ Those features, I am sorry to say, are not improved by the lapse of time, since we last met,” quickly cried the baronet, “ nor are they a less discerning index of a disimproving heart.—Do me the honor, sir, to look on this letter—nay, never draw back—this writing carries a clear meaning, and requires only to be superficially viewed, to attain its entire motive.”

This was no other than the letter delivered him by his cousin; and so much convinced was he, that the Captain was either the author of the forgery, or, at least, a principal concerned, that he thus heedlessly ventured to confront him without considering how little able he was to substantiate

substantiate the charge, or even to vindicate his own character in case of a retort, in which the probability would so evidently make so much against him.

“ I have looked at the letter,” replied the officer, with a wonderful composure, “ yet I confess myself totally unable to conjecture the motive that has procured me the honor of such a rare piece of confidence ;—do you, Sir Samuel,” added he, with a sarcastic accent, “ always submit your love dictated compositions to the criticism of your friends ?—if you do, from me at least expect candour. In faith, even in a literary sense, this is but a wretched specimen ; but when I consider that the intention is, or has been, to alarm
the

the anxiety and fear of a poor credulous wretch, already ruined by your artifices. I could bestow on it a more just and a harsher epithet;—nay, never blush, none there be who doubt the virtues of the redoubtable knight, Sir Samuel Belford; nor when he is even detected in the vile endeavour to sow the seeds of confusion, in a family already plunged in domestic calamity, must it be inferred that his intentions are not pure and upright.”

Sir Samuel stood astonished;—there was something so like integrity in his opponent’s manner, that he knew not what to make of it:—the mention of a calamity so recent in the family, seemed corroborated by the looks of those around

them, and the whole weakened his resolution, and the Captain taking immediate advantage, passed him with a look of ridicule which, at least, testified his superiority in presence of mind and management of the passions; the servant of Edmund, now Lord Southby, being in the hall on the entrance of Sir Samuel, carried the tidings to his master, who now more than ever anxious to see him, flew to receive him; he saw in his countenance no longer the cheerful testimony of internal satisfaction;—an evident expression of irritation and melancholy met his eye, and added a throw of anguish to his own sorrow. Sir Samuel, in like manner, read the sad alteration that a few hours had produced on the spirits of his friend;

and

And a mutual unwillingness to communicate the tale each had to unfold pervaded them, this backwardness could not long, however, conceal the truth. Edmund heard of Charlotte's disappearance with a seeming composure; he sat with his eyes fixed on the ground, scarcely a sigh escaped him, the recollection of what he had so lately suffered, by giving way to mental depression, acted against this new disappointment, and determined him to bear up against a blow which fate itself had, to every appearance, decreed. Not such was the determination of the Baronet, his sense of the injury done them was not only severe, but of the most outrageous and active kind, and his endeavours to find out his sister were, in con-

sequence, attended with the most fatiguing exertions, and the most extravagant expence; at the same time that his attention divided in favor of his friend, and the adjustment of his family affairs. Edmund, in despite of his resolution, being too agitated to take any active share in matters, which the grief of his father now rendered doubly necessary.

Some weeks passed, and still no tidings of Charlotte.—Captain Fairfax continued openly in town, and set suspicion at defiance,—indeed, the whole of his present conduct, materially weakened this suspicion, even in the baronet himself, and as to the higher circles, who had taken upon them to discuss the point with that impartiality

partiality which great circles usually do; the *thing* was a mere *hoax*, in consequence of which, Edmund was dispatched to *Coventry*, and the baronet not only accused as the author of the pretended elopement, but saddled with a number of *etceteras*, which probability sanctioned, and good natured calumny pointed out.

Edmund paid but little regard to such illiberal censure, his internal sensations were too acute to admit such frivolous items to disquiet, and his sense of the baronet's integrity being too strongly secured to be shaken by surmises;—his time was principally devoted to his father, who, in consequence, gradually recovered his spirits, and conferred, in return, all the

fondness he had so lately entertained for his deceased brother. He was, as soon as the funeral ceremony of poor Southby was over, introduced as heir to the Earl to all those of high rank, who now again claimed his acquaintance. Their congratulations had, however, but little effect on the mind of Edmund; no present acquisition, or future prospect of grandeur and rank, could make him happy. Charlotte was the chief object of his thoughts, without her, honor, and the flattery of courts, were but splendid misery—without her, every thing had lost the charm of attraction, and she was gone—gone—perhaps subjected to the brutal restraint of a man she hated; or sunk under some desperate act to save her from ruin and disgrace.

The

The Earl of Wellford, had now returned to Wellford-house, and had resumed his wonted style of living, but the noise and ceremony of greatness only tired and fatigued his son, he seized every moment of solitude to enjoy the sadness of his own thoughts, and oft would he steal forth unperceived to meditate on his fate, aided by the gloom of some unfrequented walk :—it was in one of these solitary rambles, that chance brought him near to a small house, that stood in a very obscure spot in the fields, immediately behind the new buildings in Portman-square ;—the day was fast closing, and a corresponding stillness reigned—suddenly he was alarmed by a shriek, which, amidst the solemn calm, came more forcibly to

his car.—Edmund stopt—the shriek was repeated, followed by notes of extreme terror and distress, a garden wall separated him from the house, the gate of which was locked. Edmund hesitated not at such an impediment, but vaulting over it, ran to the door from whence a cry so terrific issued, and providentially found it only a-jar;—he entered, and guided by the sound, reached the door of a back apartment, which, with one exertion of his foot, he forced open; and saw a lady sinking under the savage force of a ferocious ravisher. Edmund seized the villain by the throat, and levelling a blow at his head, stretched him senseless on the floor. He turned to raise the object thus released, but what emotion overwhelmed

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whelmed his soul, when he saw—when he held in his arms—Charlotte—the beloved of his heart, the object of all his anxiety, and the source of all his inquietudes, and at the same time was convinced that the author of an outrage, so cruel and unmanly, was a man so lately linked to him in habits of friendship, which even, till this very moment, it had been his ardent wish might have been renovated, by a satisfactory explanation.

CHAP. XLII.

The last exertion of the guilty, are sometimes successful, but generally the forerunner of destruction.

HEEDELESS, as was his usual custom, of the consequence, Lord Southby had freely disclosed the residence of Charlotte to Captain Fairfax; the difficulties hitherto thrown in the way had only increased the latter gentleman's desire, and the storm that he saw fast gathering o'er his head, required prompt and decisive measures to mitigate its fury and accomplish his ends;

ends; nor was this discovery to be lost because what is commonly understood by the term *prudence*, stood in the way to the full accomplishment of his wish; the fruitfulness of his invention was equal to a task requiring in itself so much energy and dispatch, and a friend, whose notions of religion and whose respect for the tenets of morality, were synonymous with his own, and who had experienced assistance from him, on occasions of a similar description, readily proffered his service on this case of emergency;—their servants too, equally devoted to their masters and to mischief, were far from backward in a scheme promising to themselves something like advantage,—the adoption and the execution of the diabolical

plan became, therefore, matters of equal celerity, and in the first instance attended with complete success. The letter that imposed on the unsuspecting Charlotte was forged, suitable disguises provided, and the young lady conveyed to a house, kept by the wife of one of the valets; before she had the least suspicion of the deception, and not even then, for the strength of a mixture had stupified the senses, and lulled her faculties at last into a state of absolute insensibility; in this state, she was conveyed in a chair, carried by the two valets, to the house where Edmund discovered her, which the wife of one of them above mentioned, had that very day taken for the purpose, and whose notions of virtue fitly qualified her for such an undertaking.

In

In these transactions Fairfax took no personal share, nor did he appear before Charlotte till her spirits had become less agitated.—He then threw himself on his knees before her, freely confessed the stratagem made use of to get her thus in his power, but with a wonderful appearance of sincerity, imputed the whole to the most honourable intention imaginable—to the effects of a pure and virtuous passion, which had long engrossed his thoughts, and now that the infidelity of his wife had given him the freedom he had long panted after, he now declared, without reserve, trusting that her notions of propriety would excuse the intemperance of a passion that had thus led him to snatch her from a situation, which the world
looked

looked on with contempt,—from the protection of a profest libertine, to the full enjoyment of all that is counted honourable,—all that can be counted really happy—a state of married felicity. This harangue, seasoned with all corresponding subtilty of voice and gesture, though it convinced not, yet carried with it a plausibility, which served, in some measure, to allay the horror she at first entertained on his appearance, and enabled her to assume a tone of firmness, in which she expostulated with him on such a flagrant breach of society, and intreated, as the first proof of the attachment he had avowed, to grant her full liberty to depart, and trust the rest to her consideration.

The

The Captain was too well informed in the rules of intrigue, to trust to a promise, in which the alarmed Charlotte could not command sufficient hypocrisy to give it the most trifling validity; he consented indeed to leave her for the present, but candidly declared that her liberation from her confinement depended entirely on her acquiescence with the proposal he had made; every thing, he added, in mean time, being ordered for her convenience, and that she might command what she pleased, except her liberty; this last exception annulled every idea of gratification in the breast of Charlotte, yet her native pride and opinion of her own consequence, preserved her spirits from sinking under the dread of the villainy
that

that surrounded ; the apartment in which she was confined, looked into a deserted brick-field, in which no object appeared to kindle a ray of hope—the window was nailed down, and the door of her chamber never opened with a less caution than attends the movement of the gate of a state prison, and to complete the extremity of her distress, the wretch who acted as her goaler proved equally obdurate to her sufferings, to her threats, and to her promises—but true to the task she had undertaken, the misery of her unhappy prisoner was light in the scale of her consideration. Little was to be expected from her notion of honor, less from her sympathy.

Fairfax

Fairfax visited her but seldom, and in such visits took special care to avoid observation,—his behaviour, for some time, was respectful and ceremonious, but finding that neither the handsomeness of his person, or fervency of his protestations, had made or even held out the slightest hope of making the faintest impression in his favour, he determined to throw aside the mask, and secure what he termed his happiness by force, trusting to the dire necessity she would then be reduced to for the procuration of his pardon.

It was in consequence of this vile determination, that Charlotte was forced on that dreadful trial, from the consequence of which, the interference of Edmund rescued

rescued her, at a moment when nothing within the scope of human possibility, appeared to prevent her destruction.

“ My brother !” exclaimed she, in a transport of extacy and surprise, and returning with a modest fervour, well warranted by the circumstance, his warm pressure.

“ Call me no longer *brother* !” said Edmund, softly.—“ O, my Charlotte ! I have a secret to unfold—but first let your safety be my care—fly with me.”

Fairfax had been but stunned by the blow, and soon recovered sufficiently to see his situation—he started to his feet, and

and in order to impede their flight, produced a pistol;—he presented it, but in doing it his eye met the severe frown of Edmund.—A pang of conscious guilt enerved his arm, and the instrument fell from his hand.

Whatever Edmund thought of his own safety, the safety of Charlotte was so near to him that an opportunity so unexpectedly favourable could not escape him,—he snatched up the pistol, and in turn taking aim at the head of its proprietor, commanded him, in a firm and determined tone, to make way.

The Captain had, previous to his attempt, and with the view that no particle
of

of human weakness might interfere, dispatched his female adherent on a message to a considerable distance; he stood now, therefore, without the shadow of aid, at the mercy of a man, of all others, whom he had most reason to dread, and whose spirit he well knew was equal to the task of revenging the injuries he had sustained. The courage, that had hitherto enabled him to outface the resentment of those whom his nefarious practices had rendered enemies, now forsook him, a fearful shivering seized every limb.

“Is this Fairfax?” cried Edmund, in a voice of irony and contempt, “once so closely linked in friendship, and by me so much esteemed for his manliness and
strict

strict honour.—Durst you, wretch as you are, attempt the virtue of this divine creature, and art afraid to die?—how fallen—how mean and despicable—to hurt you would be to tread on a worm, in the wantonness of resentment—on an insect every way beneath my revenge; above all, the remembrance of what I once thought you, be thy protection,—live, therefore, and life to a wretch, involved in the vortex of his own crimes, will be punishment sufficient.”

Edmund led Charlotte, faint and trembling, out of the house, without the smallest interruption being offered; and on the outside of the gate was equally surprised and pleased, by the appearance of
his

his servant Joseph;—during the late melancholy rambles of his master, this faithful fellow constantly watched his steps, ever ready in case of emergency to render his aid and assistance. In the present moment his presence was highly serviceable, being sufficiently armed to keep the enemy in check, whilst his master conducted the lady to an ale-house in the vicinity, into the parlour of which having safely gained admittance, Joseph was dispatched for a coach. Edmund secured the door, and throwing himself on his knees, breathed the tenderest words of consolation to the ear of Charlotte.

How sudden and agreeable was such a change to this lovely girl, snatched from
horror,

horror, a thousand times more excruciating than the absolute certainty of immediate death, to the extatic transport of beholding at her feet the dearest object of her regard, apparently blessed with renovated health, and gazing on her with all the ardour of pure and undiminished affection. The mysterious words, "*call me no longer brother!*" still hung on her ear, and dilated the most exquisite fibres of the heart.—They had been uttered in an accent of inexpressible softness, and implied a something beyond the common acceptation of their meaning.—He now pressed her hand to his lips, without her having power to withdraw it.—“Forbear, brother!” she gently said; her prudence came again to her aid, and she
would

would have disengaged herself from his grasp ——“ Call me no longer brother, my Charlotte !” repeated Edmund, in an impathetic tone, “ strange and unexpected discoveries have been made, since I was last blest with your company ;—no longer must we distinguish one another by such terms of affinity as brother and sister, but by those of a still nearer denomination—yes, my adored girl, by this pledge of future felicity—this chaste embrace which, to my long sufferings, gives me some just pretention, I swear, that your consent to call me by the tenderest of all human appellations, can alone restore me to health, and bless me with complete happiness ; the strongest proofs certify that we are not allied by ties of blood—

hesitate

hesitate not then to declare your determination.—Beyond every earthly consideration goes this point with your Edmund, and till you have sealed his doom, his suspense is intolerable.”

“What would Edmund have me declare?” demanded Charlotte, in a voice scarcely audible, and with the roses of her polished cheeks acquiring double resplendency.

“Say,” cried he, eagerly, “say, you consent to be mine for ever!”

“Can you doubt it,” replied she, bursting into tears, whilst she gently patted his cheek with the most visible emotion.

Edmund caught her in his arms,—the world, and all its sorrows and inquietudes fled from his recollection, and a wild and rapturous joy overwhelmed every faculty.

Charlotte at last modestly disengaged herself—her manner struck the youth with a sense of propriety, and dropping again on his knee, exterminated his fault in vows of lasting sincerity and love.

Joseph had now brought a coach to the door, in which the happy Edmund conducted the no less happy Charlotte to her place of residence at Mrs. Martin's, having, during the short journey, succinctly related the occurrences lately come to his knowledge

knowledge concerning her, of which, till this moment, she was altogether a stranger.

The agitation the whole occasioned on the harrassed spirits of the lady, rendered quiet and rest absolutely necessary, this, on the kind suggestion of Mrs. Martin, Edmund saw and readily acquiesced in, and reluctantly withdrawing, went directly in search of Sir Samuel Belford, without whose participation his own happiness was incomplete.

CHAP. XLIII.

In which the History is concluded.

THE Baronet received the news of his sister's discovery and restoration to her liberty with the most extravagant symptoms of gladness, and could scarcely be restrained from flying immediately to her presence, and confirming their affinity by some additional testimonials to which even Edmund was as yet a stranger; for it now appeared that Sir Samuel had not only been indefatigable in his search for his sister, but had at the same time taken
much

much pains to substantiate the fact of their relationship. For which last purpose, the nurse that had so carelessly lost her, together with the wretches who had stole the child, were brought to town; their several stories, when compared with one another, tallied exactly in every necessary circumstance, and when joined to the evidence of the daughter of the old couple, as well as by that of the woman who had so wantonly bestowed the infant on Lord Wellford, and who, in consequence of an advertisement, appeared, and corroborated by the concurring testimony of Earl Wellford himself, as well as the marks and parts of dress preserved by the deceived Countess. The whole formed so convincing a conclusion, that even the most in-

credulous could not gainsay or dispute.

—The certainty that thus establishing so important a fact, would, by the will of the father, materially interfere with the personal interest of Sir Samuel, never, in the smallest degree, having checked the laudable pursuit, was a proof, amongst innumerable others, of the goodness of his heart, and endeared him more and more to his youthful friend.

The same prudential reasons that influenced Edmund, soon occurring to the Baronet, he agreed to postpone his visit to his sister until next morning, but it required more than common persuasion to prevent his exacting immediate vengeance on the head of Fairfax, whose repeated offences

were

were so flagrant and enormous, that no excuse could palliate, nor even contempt consign to oblivion. The day of reckoning was, however, at last agreed to be put off till a more distant period, and the two friends repaired to Wellford House. The Earl heard the glad tidings with a satisfaction that diverged a pleasant ray of light through the dark cloud of sorrow that enveloped him; the recent vicissitudes of fortune had given a steadiness to his thoughts at once befitting his rank in society and his station as a parent, and the warm recollection of his deceased son, of his errors, and of his improprieties, gave him a distaste for fashionable amusements, and mellowed his feelings for the enjoyment of domestic tranquillity.

The spirits of the Baronet were in the highest state of exhalation; the Earl, as has been said, felt unusual sensations of gratification, and Edmund's imagination catching at the images of bliss that the fairest probability spread before it, impregnated every faculty with the extremest delight—all now seemed smooth and even, not an intervening speck to dim the azure of the surrounding hemisphere. Sir Samuel had obtained permission of the Earl to manifest his happiness in the hospitable endeavour to confer happiness on others, and the whole house was rendered a scene of merriment and cheerfulness.

“How transitory are our visions of felicity,” said Sir Samuel, with a sigh, as he
read

read a letter just delivered to him,—Edmund, who watched his looks as he perused the paper, was filled with alarm and apprehension; he dreaded to enquire the cause of his friend's agitation, and sat silent in the most painful suspense. The Baronet, who could neither conceal his own emotion, nor avoid perceiving its effect on Edmund, presented him with the letter as the safest means of explanation. It came from Mrs. Martin,—the fortitude of poor Charlotte, that had supported her spirits in moments of peril and sorrow, was not proof against the sudden influx of good fortune, and now aided the enervating consequences of her severe confinement, produced a fever.—A gentleman of the faculty, who instantly attended, expressed

a doubt of her recovery, and Mrs. Martin, in the violence of her fears, had dispatched the sad account to her cousin.

Impelled by a sympathetic impulse, Sir Samuel and Edmund instantly quitted Wellford House, they ran, or rather flew to Mrs. Martin's, and too soon found her account far from being exaggerated. The Baronet seated himself by the bed of Charlotte, amidst the tenderest enquiries concerning her illness; whilst Edmund, throwing himself on his knees, seized the hand of the fair sufferer, and imprinted on it a kiss of inexpressible agony.

“I shall be better soon,” said Charlotte, with a voice faint and exhausted, “heaven!

ven! I trust, will enable me to live to express my gratitude for all your kindness."

Edmund felt revived at these flattering expressions, but Sir Samuel read in the faded complexion, and the lost lustre of the eye, the sad prognostic of what ensued.

The fever approached its crisis with a rapidity that baffled the efforts of human skill, and on the third day from its commencement, whilst every eye was moistened with sorrow, and whilst the miserable Edmund sat motionless with anguish and apprehension, Charlotte gently prest his hand, and with an accompanying look, which unstrung every nerve, heaved a tremulous sigh, and sunk lifeless on her pillow.

Edmund saw the hopes he had so lately cherished with all the extacy of which human nature is capable gone,—and in one fatal moment the prospect of worldly happiness blasted.—“Who will tell me to be composed now?” exclaimed he, turning round with an aspect of the most pitiable agony, “when thus all that was to me dear is fled,—all that tied me to life is torn from me.—O Charlotte! lovely even in death, why hast thou left us? left me—thy Edmund—to misery inexpressible;—but I will not be thus cruelly deserted,” cried he, dashing himself on the floor, “no, I will follow you; the feeble thread that now links me to mortality, some pitying angel will cut afunder, and our liberated spirits will joyously seek those regions, where

where misery and affliction cannot disturb the bliss of immortal felicity."

His friends raised him from the ground, and would have forced him from the apartment, but, with a strength augmented by the desperation of his thoughts, he dashed them from him, and wildly throwing himself on the bed, prest the lips, and alternately gazed on the pale and faded countenance of his adored girl.—“Yet art thou warm,” cried he, “and fond imagination would flatter me that thy breath still exhales its wonted odoriferous sweets.—Angels of life!” uttered he, starting in rapture from the bed, “it is—it must be so—the lives!”—Sir Samuel Belford starting also, timously received him in his arms as he sunk backward.

The

The physician, who had not yet left the apartment, alarmed by the last exclamation of Edmund, again advanced to the bed, and on examination finding indeed a returning warmth pervade the body, and a faint tremulous motion agitate the heart, gave evident symptoms of satisfaction; and having immediate recourse to such means as his skill suggested,—the embers of life were again rekindled—the pulse again vibrated—and the fair sufferer once more opened her eyes to the inexpressible joy of those around.

Wistfully looking on the beholders, she faintly pronounced the name of Edmund,—and after a pause, added, “I thought he had been present—but it was but a dream—
—though

—though his voice seemed never more distinct, then when he said, “Charlotte, I am thine for ever !”

“Nor was heart ever more sincere than that which dictated the expression ;” cried the enraptured Edmund, again springing from the arms of his friend, and throwing himself on his knees by the side of the bed.

The physician, who best knew how dangerous the prolongation of so delicate a scene would prove to the exhausted spirits of his patient, gave the necessary hint to Sir Samuel Belford, who himself fully sensible of the danger took Edmund in his arms and carried him, without the smallest

smallest resistance, into the adjoining apartment, where giving a loose to the excess of his own joy—soon moderated the ruffled spirits of his friend.

The prudential mode prescribed by the physician, being now strictly adhered to, Charlotte recovered faster than even his own most sanguine expectation; and in a few days was able to make glad her friends that so loved and respected her, by admitting their visits without incurring the danger of a relapse. By this providential recovery, the happiness of Edmund became as permanent as the limits of human nature could admit—the shock he had received by its severity seemed to have eradicated with itself every symptom

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symptom of mental and bodily ailment, and, whilst returning health again expanded the bloom of youth over his countenance, his spirits assumed a tone, and even a volatility which scattered cheerfulness around, and materially contributed to the restoration of Charlotte, who, imitating the example of the object of her heart, became not only internally blest, but testified this bliss by every outward testimony.

To say that the Baronet felt no sensations of delight, on this auspicious turn, would be doing infinite injustice to his character—he was, in fact, as it is termed, nearly *beside himself* with joy—and set about the necessary preparations for the approaching nuptials with an alacrity and
good

good humour, which could only proceed from the gratification he felt on the occasion; in these exertions he was cordially joined by Earl Wellford, by which means all the necessary preliminaries were soon adjusted, and the ceremony of the immutable union was now only delayed in conformity with that system of decency, which the rules of custom has appropriated to the memory of so near a relative as was the late Lord Southby.

Meantime the happy parties, blest now with all that could make the mind tranquil—admired and carressed by all who knew them, in the possession of affluence, and in the probable prospect of elevated rank and distinction; still invariably

ably retained their humble notions of propriety in all their primitive purity—and in consequence acts of humanity and benevolence were not restricted by sentiments of pride or self importance.—Much as they had been injured and insulted by Major Fairfax, they could not restrain the tear of pity and commiseration for his now miserable wife,—equally forsaken by her husband and despised by the world as the abettor of his irregularities, and sunk to that consequent state of wretchedness from which pecuniary aid, however liberal, could not raise her.—As to the husband himself—terrified at the thought of the punishment that awaited the detection of his crimes, he fled from town—but he carried with him the testimonials of his wickedness—

ness—the world had now got possession of his secret history, and every comment made thereon turned to his disadvantage—he became shunned and despised—the internal sense of infamy went even beyond the general censure—his impudence deserted him—his plans to recover his good name proved abortive—his spirits at last sunk under the insupportable pressure, and in a fit of desperation, occasioned by such accumulated misery, a pistol put an end to his infamous existence.

Nor less than Clarissa, was the widowed Lady Southby the object of their mutual attention and commiseration, but unhappily, as a bar to their good intentions, her Ladyship possessed a levity and inconsiderateness

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derateness of disposition which continually operated against every endeavour to benefit or effectually assist her.—Widowhood, with all the gaudy decorations of fashionable mourning, gave even a new turn to her gaiety, and liberally assisted in the new arrangement of her domestic establishment—the dashes once more into the whirlpool of fashion—inconsideration marked her progress, and debts innumerable were contracted; but “*what of all that?*—The advice of those who really had an interest in her welfare, weighed but little in the balance against the ponderosity of the example of modern refinement, the consequence in course was, that after fluttering a short period in the sunshine of high life,—*a rude fellow* of a tradesman had her

her arrested for a sum she was unable to liquidate, and a prison was the issue. From a situation so irksome she was liberated by Edmund on the express condition of renouncing her former errors and folly—but finding herself unable to adhere to the agreement, or to re-instate her consequence in the ton—she withdrew to the Continent—the step would have been a prudent one, had a correspondent disposition connected itself with it, but *prudence* was not of the party, and accident having once more introduced her to her admirer Sir Timothy Mortimer, (who, from the dread of the consequence of the late fatal quarrel, suffered a voluntary exile from his country). Her Ladyship, to prove that revenge or ill-will formed no part of her creed,

creed, put herself under the protection of this hero.—Soon however satiated with this acquisition Sir Timothy felt little repugnance in leaving his fair associate—poverty infused—and after a sad and mortifying struggle against its effects—death—stept in and put an end to the pilgrimage of this truly eccentric female.

Of the other persons who have borne any particular part in our drama, little may be thought necessary to be said.—Old Thompson found in Edmund a friend equal to his utmost wishes. Nor was the delicate feelings of Charlotte restrained from raising the fallen Anna to a state of unexpected independence. The beauty of this young creature, with a full persuasion

sion of her return to virtue, had on the till then unconquered affections of Joseph such a powerful effect, that after much earnest solicitations and modest refusal, a match was made *on it*—which produced much happiness.—Larkins, on the contrary, after the death of his lord, soared in the regions of matrimony with the chaste daughter of a tradesman of great reputation, and after a trial of wrangling and discomfort, was forced to submit to the derision of his acquaintances and the loss of his wife—by the interference of a neighbouring publican, who carried her off in triumph.

But to desist from such digressions, and to bring at once this prolix narrative to a conclusion.

conclusion.—The happy period at last arrived that united Edmund and his beloved Charlotte by every tie that can constitute human felicity, and every necessary matter being previously prepared, they immediately set off for Wellford Lodge, where every thing bore the appearance of festivity and mirth—so greatly did Sir Samuel Belford participate in the general joy, and so deeply did he enter into the spirit of that exquisite felicity his friend now enjoyed, that he forswore celibacy, and resolved to embrace the first favourable opportunity to become a benedict; to one of his fortune, person and accomplishments, such an opportunity was soon furnished, and the two families so near allied in blood, were linked still closer by

the sweet intercourse of friendship and society. The *mistake* that had formerly occasioned so much sorrow and inquietude, now serving as a mere preparative to a full completion of happiness; and the strict and inviolable adherence to virtue and goodness hitherto maintained, now permanently insured to them, in every acceptance of the phrase, "*something beyond a joke.*"

FINIS.

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